THE

Guiding Light

BY DR. JOHN RUTHLEDGE

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THE GUIDING LIGHT

The Reverend Doctor John Ruthledge

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BY

DOCTOR JOHN RUTHLEDGE

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There is a destiny that makes us brothers
None goes his way alone.
All that we send into the lives of others
Comes back into our own.

Mary Ruthledge

Ellen

FOREWORD

SO MANY *have asked me to put in writing my memories of the past nineteen years spent in Five Points, that I have decided to do so.*

I begin my task, surrounded as it were, with dear friends of long standing. From my pen flows the names of Ellis Smith, Fredrika Lang, Abe and Mrs. Kransky, Rose and Jacob Kransky, Ned Holden, the Swenson Family, my own daughter, Mary, my new assistant, Reverend Thomas Bannion and a host of others. It is my intention to tell you of these lives which have intermingled with mine—to recount for you the sorrows and joys which they have experienced, and whose experiences have added to the fulness of my own memories, as I survey my efforts as Minister in the little Church at Five Points.

I am pervaded with a sort of sweet sadness as I think of what lies before me. My study seems crowded with the ghosts of yesterday—but it is to the living that I must devote this book—to those, whose dreams of tomorrow make the memories of yesterday a meeting ground from which to go forward. It is my sincere wish that I may bring you a closer, more understanding knowledge of my friends and neighbors in Five Points and it is to them that I dedicate this book, The Guiding Light.

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CHAPTER

I

MEMORIES

AS CHANGELESS as the evening star which heralds the approach of night is the Community of Five Points. The map of the world may have changed—kings may have been toppled from their thrones—dictators may have swerved the course of nations—but the Melting Pot remains the same. All that bears witness to the passage of time are the faces of my friends. To some the years have brought an expression of peace and serenity—to others, weariness and despair. While some have nurtured their souls with deeds of kindness and mercy—others have allowed the cancerous weeds of selfishness and indulgence to choke the growth of nobility which they might have had within themselves.

As I pause to light the lamp of friendship which stands on my desk, the gentle, understanding face of Luigi Pasquali seems to come once more before me. Luigi Pasquali, whose loyal, devoted heart now lies stilled forever—but whose gift, the friendship lamp, burns nightly in my study.

It was a little over nineteen years ago when I first became acquainted with Luigi. I had come to Five Points hoping to establish a little church which would be open to peoples of every nationality and creed—a church where the only doctrine would be the fellowship of man. At first I was met with suspicion and distrust on every side. Despite the friction which existed between the various nationalities of the Community, they presented a united front when it came to discouraging the entrance of a stranger into their midst. I had prepared myself for a certain amount of antagonism, but the cold aloofness with which I was greeted seemed to present an insurmountable barrier. It was Luigi who paved the way for a better understanding between myself and the people whom I wished to make my friends. I shall tell you of the way in which this was brought about.

At the time of which I write, dissension among the men employed in the paint factory had been aggravated by the appointment of a man named Pietro D'Ammagio to the position of Superintendent. Naturally it was assumed among the various nationalities that the Italian employees would receive preference. The undercurrent of ill-feeling soon resulted in physical violence and several rather nasty fights resulted. The owners of the factory began to feel that they had made a mistake in their choice of Superintendent, and it was rumored that a change would be made. It was then that Luigi Pasquali came to ask for my advice. D'Ammagio, he told me, was an honest, hard working man, well suited to the position. He had an innate sense of justice and had no intention of showing discrimination towards any man simply because of his nationality or creed. Moreover, as he, himself, had risen from the ranks he would have a much greater sympathy and understanding for those under his supervision. I suggested that they hold a meeting to see whether they couldn't reach an understanding. Luigi replied that he was sure the men would attend, but in their present state of mind, he feared that the meeting might not be a peaceful one. He urged me to address them, impressing on me in his broken English, that they would be more inclined to trust me, as I would have nothing either to gain or lose, no matter what was decided. After a little thought I consented and hired a vacant store in which to hold the meeting.

A confusion of thoughts raced through my mind as I stood on an improvised platform the following night. Before me were the openly suspicious, if not hostile faces of the men whom I hoped to make my friends. They had grouped themselves, perhaps unconsciously, according to their nationalities—Italians, Poles, Slavs, Germans, Swedes, and Irish—all surveyed me with questioning, unflinching eyes. The air crackled with tension as I started to speak. Nervously, at first, and then more confidently, I said:

"Friends of Five Points, and I hope you will consider me a friend, I have been asked by Luigi Pasquali to say a few words to you this evening. He has acquainted me with the situation which exists in your place of employment—he has told me that you are dissatisfied with the appointment of Pietro D'Ammagio as your Superintendent."

"Although I have never met Pietro D'Ammagio, from what I have been able to learn, he is a man who has worked side by side with a good many of you. He is a man whom you have always liked—always trusted. Your employers at the paint factory evidently think that he is the right person to be your superintendent. Instead of harboring resentment, don't you think that each and every one of you here tonight should extend a friendly hand of congratulation to D'Ammagio, a fellow worker who has risen from the ranks?"

My words evoked a rather half hearted murmur of assent among my audience, but I could tell from the expression on their faces that they were far from convinced as I continued:

"If, because of the attitude of you men—because you seem disgruntled and dissatisfied with D'Ammagio, your employers decide to replace him with a new Superintendent—a man from the outside—a man who will not be familiar with you nor with your problems—don't you see how unfair it will be both to D'Ammagio and yourselves? You will be depriving a man of a well earned promotion, and you will be depriving yourselves of a representative who will really have your interests at heart."

I paused for a moment to see what effect my words had made and was met with a stony silence. Finally a burly Irishman named O'Hearn, detached himself from his group and said:

"I don't know what anyone else thinks of what you've had to say this evening, but you strike me as being a man who's pretty much on the level. We've got nothing against D'Ammagio except that he's an Italian. How do we know that he won't take it on himself to look after his own kind while the rest of us is neglected?"

An immediate reaction on the part of the other men convinced me that O'Hearn had expressed the feeling of the crowd and I answered:

"I don't know how many nationalities are represented here tonight. Probably no other Community is as fortunate as Five Points in having men from all nations settle in one place to try to embrace the true spirit of America—the spirit of opportunity—the spirit of fair play—the spirit of freedom—freedom of thought and action. I want you to put behind you the thought that there is any discrimination shown because of nationality or creed here in America. Upon your actions today depends in part the future of this land that you have adopted as your own—you have received a rich heritage—a heritage which many of you have not earned, but which you can pass along to your children and your children's children—the heritage of freedom and tolerance. Don't, I beg of you, allow petty feelings of jealousy and suspicion to interfere with your actions as true Americans. I ask you to go home and think this problem over and then decide—as Americans mind you—not as any other nationality—just where your decision lies."

The next evening I was both surprised and pleased to receive a visit from five of the men to whom I had spoken the previous night. After an awkward moment or two, O'Hearn, who had appointed himself spokesman for the group broke the silence and said:

"Dr. Ruthledge, we've come here to thank you for going to the trouble of straightening out that little matter last evening."

"I guess a good many of us—myself included—kind of forgot that, after all, we're like you said, Americans. I guess you'll be glad to know that after you left, we decided we was wrong in feeling the way we did about D'Ammagio just because he happened to be Italian. We want to tell you that the men are all satisfied to go on as usual with him in charge."

I started to reply that I was delighted that they had seen the matter in that light, but O'Hearn interrupted:

"Dr. Ruthledge, maybe you feel that the people here in Five Points have been pretty unneighborly as far as you're concerned——"

"But to be honest, we wasn't anxious to become acquainted with you. The folks here in Five Points make a habit of minding their own business, and we don't make up with outsiders any too fast. But we got to know you pretty well when you was giving us that little lecture about us being Americans. I think I can speak for the rest of us and say that we're glad to have you with us, and anything we can do for you, we want you to let us know."

It was only a few days later that a Mr. Lewis came to see me. He introduced himself as a gentleman who was interested in the social welfare of Five Points. In a cordial way he commented on the manner in which a community problem involving the employees at the paint factory had been solved. He went on to say that in his opinion a great service could be rendered to Five Points and offered his financial support in any work which I might undertake.

Before many more days passed I began to know my neighbors more intimately. The news that I had been welcomed to Five Points by O'Hearn and his committee of five had spread rapidly.

As yet I had made no effort to build the little church I had so often dreamed of, but recalling the promise which Mr. Lewis had made me, I called on him, and together we drew up plans for the simple edifice which would be known as the Little Church of Five Points.

With a heart swelling with pride and gratitude the day finally came when I could address my friends and neighbors from my own pulpit. Gathered before me were the shining faces of those who had assembled for this momentous occasion. Through eyes partially misted with happy tears I discerned Abe and Mrs. Kransky and their little daughter, Rose—Mr. and Mrs. O'Hearn—and the hundreds of other men and women who had welcomed me into their midst. I had come to Five Points to stay. My life's work was before me.

CHAPTER

II

MARY RUTHLEDGE

THROUGH the years which have enriched my life, my motherless daughter, Mary, has been constantly by my side. I could tell you of the close association between a father and a daughter, but I prefer that she tell her story in her own way. This is Mary's chapter and I trust that she will be able to paint the picture as it has been revealed to her.

I am Mary Ruthledge. I suppose that's the way I should start my story.

My first reactions to Five Points are rather vague. I am under the impression that I missed the shade trees of our former home, but as I was too young to have formed any attachments, I accepted the change in my environment with little or no concern.

One Sunday morning after we had been in Five Points for some little time, Dad informed me that I was to put on my prettiest white dress as it was to be a very special occasion. Clinging tightly to his hand, careful not to scuff my new white shoes on the cobblestone pavements, we proceeded to walk for several moments when Dad stopped and said to me:

"Mary, do you see that little white church with the people gathered before it?"

I replied that I did.

"That's where we're going, Mary. That little church is a gift which has been made to the people of Five Points. I have been told that it will be my privilege to speak to the people of Five Points whenever they care to come and listen to me. I am going to speak to them for the first time today, so I want you to be a good little girl and sit very quietly until after the service is over."

When I had assured him that I would be on my very best behavior, he continued:

"That little white house which you see beside the church is going to be our home in the future. I know you're going to be very happy there."

Proudly, with my hand in his, I accompanied him up the aisle and took my place just under the pulpit.

Soon Dad started to speak and the buzz of voices which were audible only a moment before, disappeared, as the congregation listened to his words. I was conscious of a deep feeling of pride at the sound of his voice and the deep happiness which it seemed to contain.

We left the church together and entered our new home where another surprise awaited me.

The door was opened by a woman I had never seen before. We followed her into a room where Dad said:

"Mary, this is Ellen. She has come to keep house for us. Ellen, this is my daughter, Mary."

Ellen replied: "I am glad to know you, Mary," and when I lifted my face to be kissed, she hugged me to her very tightly.

I think I realized instinctively even then, that Ellen was a person to be trusted, and the years which followed proved that I was right.

One evening after I had been put to bed by Ellen, I was awakened from my sleep by a rather violent thunder storm. Soon I was conscious of voices downstairs in the living room, and when I tiptoed to the head of the stairs, I saw Dad and Ellen talking to a little boy of about my own age. He looked thin and dirty, and the few words which I could overhear held a note of sadness which I don't think I shall ever forget. In a moment I became aware that I had no right to eavesdrop and hurried back to bed, but it was a long time before I was able to fall asleep. Somehow the words of that little boy kept ringing in my ears. "My mother went away and left me behind."

When I came down to breakfast the next morning, Dad greeted me with the words:

"Mary, we have a guest for breakfast today—a young man named Ned Holden. I hope you will make him feel at home."

After the meal was over, Dad suggested that I show him our garden and we went out through the kitchen together, where Ellen smiled at us approvingly.

Once into the garden I lead him to a bench under a bush which was just then covered with lilacs. I finally broke the silence by saying:

"Your name's Ned, isn't it?"

His eyes were on a June bug as he answered,

"Yes, and yours is Mary."

"What's your last name?" I prompted.

"Holden. What's yours?"

"Mary Ruthledge. Dr. Ruthledge is my father."

Soon we were chatting gaily together. Ellen found us still sitting on the bench under the lilac bush, each deeply absorbed in the other, when she came to tell us it was time for lunch.

That evening after Ellen had listened to me say my prayers, I said:

"Ellen, can Ned stay here?"

Ellen put me off with:

"We'll see, Mary. We'll see what your father says."

Ned was there the next morning and every morning thereafter. Nothing was said, but it was understood that in the future he was to make his home with us.

It wasn't long before Ned started to school, and I looked forward impatiently to the day when I could share this new world with him. I looked longingly at the books which seemed to separate us, but soon I too was initiated into the mysteries of the alphabet, and my evenings were shared with Ned as he painstakingly pointed out the answers to the problems he had learned the year before.

Music next began to occupy my spare time. I seemed to have a little talent for the piano, and Dad engaged a musician in the neighborhood to give me lessons.

The days sped by. Although I couldn't understand it then, Ned seemed to shrink from other boys and girls and appeared satisfied to devote most of his time to me. I applauded with the others when he received his graduation diploma from High School, and I looked down for his encouraging smile when it came my turn to say good-bye to my classmates, although I suspected that few of them would ever leave Five Points.

Despite the fact that it would have meant a struggle, Dad offered to help Ned through college, but Ned insisted that it was time he started to earn his own way, and decided that he would like to work on a newspaper. I'll never forget his look of pride when he announced one day that he had landed a job, and that the first thing we knew, he'd be Ned Holden, star reporter.

Ned's new duties necessarily took him away from home a good deal of the time, and I devoted myself more and more to my music. One evening Dad called me into his study where he had been talking to a Mr. Lewis and asked me to play for them. After I had finished, Mr. Lewis said:

"I've been thinking for some time, Dr. Ruthledge, that your church will never be complete without an organ. Now that I've discovered that you have an accomplished musician right in your own family, I intend to do something about it."

He was as good as his word. One summer evening the congregation which had gathered to hear one of Dad's lectures was greatly surprised to be greeted by the strains of organ music, and except for a brief period in my life, which you will hear about later, I have never failed to play whenever meetings were held in the church.

The organ seemed to become part of me and my spirit soared as the music filled the little building. I had just finished playing the Abend Lied one afternoon when I was startled to hear an unfamiliar voice say:

"Well done."

Beside me stood a tall, rather emaciated looking young man who surveyed me with a look of amusement in his cynical, deep set eyes.

I had thought the door locked, and asked him how he had managed to get in.

"Through the door, as a gentleman should," he replied.

Then he asked me if he were in a church, and when I assured him that he was, he inquired the name of the pastor.

I told him my father's name was Dr. Ruthledge.

The amusement in his eyes was replaced by a look of scorn as he questioned me with the words:

"Dr. Ruthledge? Not the Good Samaritan?"

"Some call him that," I answered.

"The Good Samaritan! The Good Samaritan!" he repeated, as he started to laugh.

I asked him what was so funny about that, but in the middle of my sentence, he stopped laughing, the color seemed to drain from his face, and before I realized what had happened he had fainted.

I called Ellen and Dad, and between us we managed to carry him into the house where he revived. But he was still very weak and Dad convinced him that he would be wise to remain with us until he had recovered his strength.

Although I held several conversations with him in the days that followed, he was reluctant to reveal his identity. With a rather bitter smile he said he was Mr. Nobody from Nowhere, but on several occasions he revealed a very charming personality which made me want to know him better.

About this time I became aware that Ned Holden, whom I still regarded as a brother was in love with me. Perhaps it was the presence of Mr. Nobody in our home and the fact that I had confided to Ned that this stranger interested me which prompted Ned to speak of his love. At first I found it hard to reconcile myself to the idea that the little boy who stood wet and shivering in our living room so many years before—the little boy who sat on the bench beside me underneath the lilac bush—now wanted me for his wife. But I promised Ned I would think it over.

Through many sleepless nights I pondered in troubled silence. Then one night I knew the answer, I, too, was in love. Ned must have read it in my eyes, for he took me tenderly in his arms and together we made plans for our marriage.

Despite the happiness which we found in our newly discovered love for each other, there seemed always to come between us an ominous shadow of doubt whenever Ned spoke of his parents. His fear of what his background might have been—his dread of bringing children into the world who might inherit traits of which he, himself, was unaware preyed constantly on his mind. Over and over I tried to reassure him that his anxiety was groundless, but on the day before we were to be married the blow fell.

While Ned stood on our porch waiting for me to join him, through the open window he heard a convicted murderess talking to Dad. He heard Fredrika Lang tell of her plans to leave Five Points so that Ned should never know she was his mother. Crushed by this startling revelation, he upbraided Dad for withholding this knowledge from him and ran blindly into the night leaving me behind him as his mother had left him behind so many years before.

* * * * *

I have but little more to add. Scarcely had I come to what I thought would be the end of my chapter, when Ned returned to Five Points. My heart sank when he introduced me to his wife. I can't reconcile myself to the fact that this other girl possesses the only man who can ever mean anything to me. I can't believe that Ned is really in love with her. I can't believe that he can ever find happiness with her. Something will have to happen to awaken Ned to the realization that he has made a mistake. Something will have to happen!

CHAPTER

III

NED HOLDEN

AMONG the papers which Ned Holden left behind him when he disappeared from Five Points, I discovered a diary addressed to me. On opening it, I found a note which read:

> "Dear Doc:
>
> Should anything ever happen to me, I want you to have this. You have always encouraged me in my desire to write, and it will make me happy to know that my first efforts, in the form of a diary, will be in your keeping.
>
> Affectionately,
> Ned."

I have wondered whether Ned wouldn't like to have his diary form a portion of the chapter which I intended him to write. After due deliberation I have concluded that he would. I have taken the liberty of omitting a number of his entries, but enough has been retained to give you a better picture of this young man who has been as my own son to me. Of necessity, it is I, who must finish this chapter, but the events leading up to the tragedy which affected his life will be told just as he related them in the leather bound book which lies on my desk before me. His first writing is dated:

JUNE 10, 1929.

It seems unbelievable that I, Ned Holden, am about to graduate from High School. I am nineteen years old, and eleven of those years have been spent in the home of Dr. Ruthledge, the Good Samaritan of Five Points. I have a very bitter memory of a cold, wet night, when a woman whom I called, mother, said good-bye to me. I remember sitting alone in a dark room while I waited for a man whom she told me would come to take care of me. Unable to stand the silence any longer, I went out into the rain, desperately trying to keep my courage, but finally my dread of the unknown became too strong for me and I could taste the salt in my mouth from the tears I couldn't hold back. A man with a gentle voice stopped me at the corner of the street, and asked me:

"Is your name, Ned?"

Between sobs I said that it was.

Without another word he took me by the hand and I followed along willingly enough until we paused in front of a house which gleamed white even through the fog. Once inside, I managed to blurt out the story that my mother had gone away and left me behind. I remember a heartsick kid who was fed and bathed and put gratefully to bed.

I remember as if in a dream, my meeting with Mary Ruthledge the following morning. Mary Ruthledge, who led me out into the garden, and who in a few minutes made me feel as though I had always known her — — Mary, who made me forget that I was homeless and that my mother had deserted me — — — Mary, whose warm, generous spirit and contagious laughter transformed the little garden into a fairyland of beauty by her very presence.

I consciously dreaded the time when I would have to go away, but that time never came. Dr. Ruthledge took it for granted that I would stay, and I welcomed the thought that in the future this was to be my home. I never could quite understand how he knew my name was Ned when he spoke to me on the street, but I felt it was something I shouldn't ask about, so I never did.

Now that I'm about to leave High School, I look back and discover that so far my life has been a curious mixture of joy and unhappiness. It isn't difficult to account for the shyness which I felt with other boys and girls. I've always been aware that somehow I was looked down upon as a kid who didn't belong. I was always afraid that I might be asked embarrassing questions about my parents. I have at times been conscious of a desire to strike out blindly when other boys boasted about their mothers and fathers.

If I could only overcome this uncertainty about my background, I could look forward to my graduation with a light heart. I shall try to put it out of my mind. I must try to follow Doc's advice and convince myself that it's only the future that matters.

JUNE 17, 1929.

This evening I stood on the stage of the school auditorium and received my diploma. I don't know which made me happier — — Doc's pleasure, or Mary's. Mary kissed me impulsively. I was tempted to kiss her in return but I was suddenly self-conscious. I guess it's because I'm growing up. It's hard to believe that I'm about to try to make my own way in the world.

AUG. 1, 1929.

I've been trying all summer to land a job. Doc asked me today if I'd like to go to college, but I told him, "No." We discussed what sort of work I would be best fitted for and we both agreed that I might have a future in journalism.

SEPT. 15, 1929.

I finally found employment! On a newspaper! I'm to chase ambulances and fire engines! Not much money but a wonderful opportunity. When I burst into the house this evening with the good news, Mary kissed me again. She thinks of me only as her brother, of course. Maybe some say if I'm successful — — —

DEC. 24, 1929.

Today was both a sad and happy one for me. Sad because it made me wonder what Christmas must be like for those who have their own fathers and mothers to share it with. Happy, because my boss praised me for a story I turned in to the paper. He said he had his eye on me and to keep up the good work. I told Doc and Mary about it when we were trimming the tree. They were both so glad it made me feel like crying.

JUNE 17, 1932.

Mary graduated tonight. She looked sweet standing there in her white dress. Doc was busy talking with some of the proud parents, so Mary and I walked home together. Mary wants to devote all her time to music. I held her hand crossing the street and it made me feel ashamed because I was conscious that she was a girl.

Ned Holden

Fredrika Lang

JAN. 5, 1934.

I went to my boss today and said:

"I'm tired chasing ambulances and fire engines. I'm entitled to regular assignments as a full fledged reporter."

Imagine my surprise when he answered:

"I've been waiting for you to tell me that, Holden. I wasn't going to advance you until I was sure that you'd gotten over some of that shyness you had when you first came on the paper."

I'm really getting ahead. I can't get over that strange feeling of shyness I have with Mary, though.

MAR. 11, 1934.

I'm covering a murder trial. It looks as though the woman was guilty. Gee! I'd hate to have anybody I knew in a spot like that!

SEPT. 5, 1935.

A surprise party at the newspaper office. The editor celebrated his twenty-fifth anniversary at the same desk. Gee! If that's the way they hold on to their jobs around here, what chance have I got? From the way everybody acts towards me I guess I'm pretty well liked. I wonder what they'd think if they knew I was just a kid that Doc picked up off the street? I start writing tonight on a book I've had in mind for a long time.

FEB. 10, 1936.

I can't stand it any longer. I've got to tell Mary I love her. A stranger who calls himself Mr. Nobody, seems to be making a play for her. I'll go crazy if I keep it to myself any longer. I'm going to tell her tonight.

MAY 12, 1936.

I'm still waiting for Mary to let me know how she feels about me. I don't blame her for taking a long time to make up her mind. I guess I had a lot of nerve to expect that anyone like Mary would want to marry a man with my background.

NOVEMBER 8, 1937.

Today is the happiest day of my life. Mary has promised to be my wife. I can't believe that it's really true. Every day since I first told her I loved her, I've been waiting for an answer. Last night I knew what that answer was. I took her in my arms and kissed her for the first time, as I've wanted to kiss her all these years. I'll make you happy, Mary! I'll make you happy — — — — always!

DEC. 25, 1937.

What a Christmas Day! My book is published! I brought a copy to Doc and Mary. Doc's voice broke when he read the inscription I had written. Mary threw her arms around me and kissed me. I told her I was going to spend my first royalty on a wedding present for her.

JAN. 10, 1938.

My first royalty check came in from the Cunningham Publishing Co. Doc had some guests in to dinner. Fredrika Lang and Mary's cousin. I like Mrs. Lang very much. I feel as though I'd like to know her better. Mary admired a brooch Mrs. Lang was wearing. I'm going to see Mrs. Lang tomorrow and ask her if she won't sell it. If she'll take my hundred dollar royalty check, Mary's wedding present will be all taken care of.

JAN. 18, 1938.

A fine fraud Mrs. Lang turned out to be! My check for a hundred dollars that I paid her for the brooch came back from the bank, raised to a thousand dollars. She denied knowing anything about it, but I know she was in on it — — she and a man named Paul Burns. I hate to lose faith in people. I liked her very much.

JAN. 28, 1938.

I certainly was right where Mrs. Lang was concerned! I got a tip on a shooting in Five Points today, and lo! and behold! if she hadn't just finished murdering her partner in crime, Paul Burns. I'm assigned to the story. If they want any added evidence of her criminal activities I'll be glad to testify about the raised check.

FEB. 1, 1938.

Fredrika Lang was indicted today. Doc seems very much upset about it. When I told him about her swindling tactics, he seemed to take her part. I can't understand it.

MAR. 4, 1938.

The jury has enough evidence against Mrs. Lang to send her to the electric chair. Doc insisted that I don't testify against her. He has already taken the stand in her behalf and the people in Five Points don't like it very well. There's some mystery about all this. What it is, I'm not able to discover. Mary and I have set our wedding date for the Fourth of May. Now that the time is drawing closer, I can't help but wonder about my background again.

APR. 8, 1938.

The jury brought in a verdict of guilty. Fredrika Lang was sentenced to die in the electric chair on the second of May. — — The second of May — — two days before Mary and I are going to be married. Oh well, I'm glad it's over. Whatever happens to her has no bearing on our lives. I wish I could shake off this feeling that I have. Why should I start worrying all over again about my parents? Mary doesn't seem concerned. Maybe I'm being foolish.

MAY 1, 1938.

Fredrika Lang was pardoned by the Governor today. To say that I was surprised is putting it mildly. If ever a woman deserved to be punished it was she. I think Doc had something to do with the pardon. Anyway he was gone on some mysterious errand. Well, it's no concern of mine. I've got Mary to think of and our future happiness together.

MAY 3, 1938.

Tomorrow, Mary and I will be married. I've kept our honeymoon plans a secret. I want to surprise her. In a few minutes we're going over to look at our apartment. It isn't very big but it will do until we have a family — — —. A family — — children — maybe I'm wrong to have such thoughts — now — just before Mary becomes my wife — but I can't help it. And the children will take after Mary — — What if they should take after me? I wonder who my parents are and if my children — — I mustn't think such things — — Mary's waiting. — — And tomorrow — — tomorrow — —

As I told you it is I Dr. Ruthledge who must finish this chapter.

Ned's diary ends there. The tomorrow he had so joyfully anticipated never arrived. As Mary has already told you, Ned overheard Fredrika Lang talking with me—overheard her say that Ned was never to know that she was his mother.

Until Ned finds himself he will never come back. But I know the boy. I know there is too much that is good and fine in him to ever permit him to brood forever over what has passed. I trust the day will come when he will return to Five Points. I pray that he may overcome his great fear of inherited criminal tendencies and find happiness with Mary. The rays from the lamp of friendship will always welcome him back to the parsonage.

CHAPTER

IV

FREDRIKA LANG

It was with a certain amount of reluctance that I spoke to Fredrika Lang about this book. Knowing that it would never be complete without a chapter devoted to her, I nevertheless hesitated to ask that she write it. I felt that the heartbreak which had come into her life was still too fresh, too poignant. I felt that in order to put in writing the tragedy she had lived through, she would be forced to undergo again the untold suffering which she had experienced but a few months before.

One day I said to her:

"Fredrika, would you mind if I told your story as I know it?"

I told her my feelings about the matter. I told her that I didn't think she should undertake a task which would be sure to prove a very trying ordeal for her.

"Even you, Dr. Ruthledge, who know me so well, can't possibly know the story of Fredrika Lang as I do. If you would want me to tell it, I will," Fredrika replied.

Here then is her own account of her love for a man—a man who brought her within the shadow of the electric chair. The story of Fredrika Lang:

On my last birthday, I was forty-five years old. When I was sixteen, I met Paul Holden for the first time. I allowed the meeting to take on a romantic aspect, which it doubtless didn't possess. I remember the occasion very well. I had gone to the theatre with my father and mother. I remember humming to myself the tune, "Alexander's Rag Time Band," which had been one of the hits of the show. In the foyer, I became separated from my parents, and somehow in the bustle of the crowd, I dropped my handbag. It was returned to me by the handsomest man I had ever seen. Immaculately dressed in evening clothes, his courteous manner and charming personality made an immediate impression on me. He told me his name and I told him mine. We were soon engrossed in a conversation. Before he left the theatre, he asked if he might call, and I told him I would have to have the permission of my parents.

The next morning he phoned and I told him that he might call at my home that evening. Inside of a week, I was hopelessly in love with him.

When he asked me to marry him, my happiness knew no bounds. Long after my love for him had been destroyed by his cruelty, the knowledge that he had cared enough about me to ask me to share his name induced me to stay with him. I didn't realize until much later that marriage was only a means to an end. He knew that my father was wealthy and he hoped by this method to secure a settlement.

Knowing that consent to our marriage was out of the question, we planned to elope. One summer evening, I hurriedly packed a few clothes in a bag, scribbled a hasty note of good-bye, remembered at the last minute to return for my jewelry which my grandmother had left me, and in a few minutes we were on our way to a justice of the peace.

It may have been prophetic that it was I who paid for the ceremony. Paul explained that a looked-for check had not arrived and I accepted his explanation at its face value. I had been able to withdraw my savings account from the bank—a considerable sum which my grandfather had deposited for me. I turned everything over to Paul. Nothing seemed important to me except that I was married to the man I loved.

For six deliriously happy months, time and space stood still.

Gradually, however, Paul's attitude toward me seemed to change. In place of the gay, carefree companion I had learned to expect, he became morose and short tempered. Several times he asked if I had written home, and when I answered "No," he became more moody than ever. For a while I thought he might be brooding because he held himself responsible for the breach between my parents and myself, and I tried to cheer him up by saying that nothing mattered so long as I had him, but my efforts seemed only to increase his dejection.

I had known for some time that I was to have a baby, but somehow I found it difficult to tell Paul my good news. I rather timidly suggested several times that I would welcome the security of a home, that I was tired of trains and hotels, but he apparently ignored me. Finally one day, he said,

"Frances, how would you like to live in Cleveland?"

I replied that it would make me very happy.

"Very well," he answered, "I have an agent looking up a house for us, and next week we'll go and see what it looks like."

Impatiently I waited for my first glimpse of what I hoped would be my future home. All my dreams of what our lives together would be like came back in a flash. Nor was I disappointed when I saw the house which Paul had selected. It was a bungalow on a quiet, well shaded street. The yard was spacious and I was grateful for such an ideal place to raise my *awaited baby*. I decided I would tell Paul about the baby that evening.

Before I had a chance to do so, however, Paul brought up a subject which rather surprised me. He prefaced his thoughts by saying:

"Are you happy here, my dear?"

I told him it was what I wanted more than anything else in the world.

He kissed me with a tenderness that had been missing for several months, and then continued:

"I don't know whether you realize it or not, Frances, but our funds are running low."

"I know they must be, Paul," I answered. "You've been away from your work for so long and then buying this house——"

"But I haven't bought this house, darling," he explained. "I've only leased it. I've paid the first month's rent, but after that—well, something will have to be done."

"But wasn't it business that made you decide to come to Cleveland?" I asked him. "Won't we have enough income from that?"

Paul gazed at me in a rather speculating way for a moment before replying:

"Frances, your naïveté is rather refreshing. My business is a rather difficult one to describe. I live, you might say, by my wits. I have a great aversion to working—an aversion which I don't think I shall ever overcome. There are easier ways to obtain money."

"Easier ways?" I gasped.

"Oh, not what you're thinking," he answered. "But I must have capital—not a great deal—but enough to get around and meet the right people—people like your father who have money to invest."

"The money I gave you," I faltered.

"I thought you'd get around to that sooner or later. That money is gone, my dear. You must admit we had a rather expensive honeymoon. One doesn't travel around the country on air, and I think you'll agree with me that no bride ever received more *undivided* attention from her husband."

"You've been wonderful, Paul," I admitted, "but I had no idea things were so bad financially. I've been very selfish. I've been thinking only of myself and my happiness."

He put his arm around me. "You mustn't blame yourself, Frances. I wanted to be with you every minute. But now I have to ask you to do something for me."

"What, Paul? What can I do?"

"Don't you think your family would come to your assistance if you should ask them for help?"

"Oh, Paul, I couldn't. That's—that's unthinkable! What would they think of me? What would they think of you?"

He smiled enigmatically. "Judging from their actions in the past, I don't think their opinions of me would be altered much."

"Oh, don't be bitter, darling," I told him. "You've a right to feel hurt at the way they've treated you, but that's only because they don't know you as I do." I decided that now would be the time to tell him about the baby. "There's something I haven't told you, Paul—something that will give you a new incentive to succeed without any help from anyone. I'm going to have a baby."

"Frances!"

There was silence for a moment while my heart turned to ice. Paul didn't want the baby. I could tell by his expression. Finally I said:

"Paul, have you nothing to say?"

"There doesn't seem to be very much for me to say—except that now it would seem to me to be more urgent than ever that you write to your home."

"No, Paul—not that. We'll manage somehow."

He turned his slow smile on me. "Have you any ideas?"

"Something will turn up for you. Something will have to."

"While we're waiting," he drawled, "much as I hate to suggest it, what would you think of converting some of your jewels into cash?"

"Those are heirlooms," I said, horrified. "They were left me by my grandmother."

"I'm sure your grandmother would be very happy to see them put to such good use. You'll need a doctor, you know, Frances. And in the meantime, if you can raise enough to give me a little capital, perhaps I can run it up into a larger sum."

That night, as I lay beside this man who suddenly seemed like a stranger, a confusion of thoughts raced through my mind. I told myself over and over again that I did love him—that his love was all that mattered, and that it was up to me to see that he really made something of his life. I was sure, young as I was, that my love for Paul was no fleeting passion but a deep and lasting devotion. I thought then that no other man could swerve that devotion. I didn't know that my unborn baby, who was to be called Ned, would some day come between my husband and myself.

I pawned enough of my jewelry the next day to give us both a reasonable feeling of security. Paul asked me a short time later.

"Frances, would you mind if I went away for a few days?"

"Went away, Paul?"

"Yes. I told you when I asked you to sell your jewels that I would try to make the money pay dividends."

"But must you go away for that?" I stammered.

"I have just learned of an opportunity in Philadelphia which looks rather good. I promise, I won't be gone long. When I return, my dear, our money troubles will be over."

I spent the next few weeks in abject misery. Although Paul promised to write me every day, his notes were few and far between. Brief messages—"I am doing well," "Hope to see you soon." One note contained a ten dollar bill as proof of his success. I wrote at great length every morning. I tried to show him that I was being brave about his absence, but finally when I knew that in a few days my baby would be born, I implored him to return. My letter went unanswered.

One morning, just as the first flush of dawn announced the arrival of a new day, I emerged from the shadows of death and hugged a tender infant to my breast. Through a succession of days and nights, I watched this infant grow strong and sturdy in my arms. One birthday passed, then two—and still no word from Paul.

From a distant cousin came the news that my mother had died. With an aching heart, I poured out my grief in a letter to my father, but it was returned unopened.

When Ned was three, I was awakened from my sleep one night by a series of insistent rings at the front door bell. With a curious feeling of dread, I hastened to answer it, and in response to my anxious query, "Who is there?" I heard a familiar voice.

With hands that trembled with excitement, I unlocked the door and admitted Paul. He was unshaven. His face was the color of slate. A tattered raincoat only partially concealed a prison garb, but his face wore the same crooked smile, his voice drawled in the same way, as he asked,

"Are you glad to see me, Frances?"

"Paul, wherever have you been? What's happened?" I managed to exclaim.

"I'll tell you everything in good time, my dear. For the present, however, I would greatly appreciate your getting me something to eat, while I make myself a little more presentable."

Bathed and shaved, he sat across from me at the table, a little later, and told his story. With the money I had given him, he had gone to Philadelphia, where he was successful, for a time, in selling oil stocks. When the company was exposed as fraudulent, he had passed a bogus check and had been arrested. His conviction had carried a sentence of ten years in prison, but three days before, he had managed to escape. He concluded his narrative by saying:

"The reason I didn't write, Frances, was because I knew some day I would escape, and I wanted to take no chances on being followed. However, things didn't work out exactly as I planned. I have an idea that I have been traced to this neighborhood, which makes it necessary for us to leave in the morning. I hope you have some money."

I told him there was very little left—that I had been forced to pawn all my jewelry with the exception of a brooch, but that there was enough to enable us to move.

He took me in his arms and I knew that I still loved him—loved him in spite of what he had done.

"I've missed you, Frances," he said.

"And I've missed you," I told him.

I found a fleeting joy in his embraces. Perhaps it was more compassion than love that he took from me that night, but long after he was asleep, I lay making plans for the future. He had neglected to ask, and I had not told him about Ned. The boy must never know that his father had been in prison. There was no alternative, we must move away. Tomorrow was another day. We could make a fresh start.

But the little town of Lima, Ohio, where we settled wasn't big enough for Paul. Soon his ambitions for easy money took him away from me again. He managed to keep clear of the law, for I heard from him regularly. First, his letters were pleading. He begged me to ask my father for money. When I refused, he became insistent and even threatened to go and demand that my father help him out. I wrote and told him that I would never under any circumstances, appeal to anyone in my family—that if he did as he threatened, I would expose him as an escaped criminal and for the time being, the matter was dropped.

In the meantime, I devoted myself to Ned who was rapidly approaching school age. I had managed to secure a position as cashier in a local store and although I was forced to use strict economy, we managed to get along. I worshipped my son with his gentle, devoted ways and already I was learning to lie with conviction whenever he questioned me about his father.

Ned was in the second grade of school when I next saw Paul. He came upon me unexpectedly one afternoon when I was seated behind the caged enclosure of my desk and to my startled exclamation of surprise he whispered:

"I had to see you, Frances. What time are you finished here?"

I told him I would be home around six and gave him my address.

I gave Ned his supper early that evening and asked him to go to bed, explaining that I was expecting company. Although childishly curious about my unusual request he obeyed dutifully and a short time later Paul arrived.

I let him kiss me and I experienced a mingled feeling of compassion and a half forgotten love. He asked for Ned.

"Ned has gone to bed," I told him. "I thought it better that he didn't see you."

"Ashamed of me, Frances?" he asked.

"No, Paul, not ashamed. But I can't let him know that you're his father unless you're willing to come back and stay with us."

When he made no answer, I continued:

"I assume you're not willing to do that, Paul."

"No, my dear, I don't think I'd be too happy in this little town. But I didn't come here to see my son. I came here to see you."

"I have no money, Paul."

"You're too modest, darling," he replied. "I've been away for a long time. I've missed you. I haven't forgotten what a sweet, lovely wife I've married, even if I haven't lived up to your ideals of what a husband ought to be."

That night I begged him again to settle down. I told him Ned needed a father, that there was still a chance of our finding happiness together, but the next morning before I awakened, he was gone.

A few hours later I was without a job. Shortly before opening time, some one had entered the store and robbed it. The lock had not been forced, and when I was asked to produce my key I discovered it was missing. Although no charges were made against me, I found it impossible to secure another position, and after wandering from place to place I found myself in Five Points, with Ned.

Hardly had we gotten settled in a shabby room in a tenement building when Paul once more appeared.

"Why did you follow us here?" I asked him.

"Was that our son sitting on the step as I came in?" he asked.

"Yes, Paul. That was the son who doesn't know his own father."

His next question startled me with its unexpectedness.

"Do you still love me, Frances?"

"Before I answer that, Paul, tell me this: Did you take a key from my bag and rob the store in Lima the night you came to see me?"

He appeared horror stricken. "Frances, think what you will of me, but don't, I beg of you, make me out a common thief. If that store was robbed, I assure you, I know nothing about it."

Against my better judgment, I believed him; I wanted to believe him. I wanted to have faith in the man I still considered as my husband. "I'm sorry, Paul," I said. "I shouldn't have doubted you."

"But you haven't answered my question," he insisted.

"You asked me if I still loved you?"

"Yes."

"Yes, Paul. I do. I still love you very much."

He seemed elated over my reply. "Enough to leave everything and come away with me."

"What else is there to leave?" I said hopelessly. "I have no home, no family, nothing Paul, only you and Ned." No matter where we live it can't make any difference.

Paul then explained that he wanted me to leave Ned behind. He told me that his plans would require us both to travel, that our gypsy-like existence would work a hardship on our son. He told me over and over again that he needed me; that once and for all he was determined to turn over a new leaf; that after I had helped him to succeed we could return for Ned and give him the advantages which were at present impossible. I told him that it was out of the question; that I could never leave Ned behind.

I was torn between my love for Ned and my duty toward my husband. It was my indecision that made Paul again leave that night. Almost a week later, I received a letter from him, pleading with me to meet him in Kansas. It was the urgency of his letter—he was in difficulty and needed me—that made me decide to go to him.

But where to leave Ned? If only I had enough money to send him to boarding school! That hope was too forlorn to be considered. Then suddenly I thought of Dr. Ruthledge, whom the people in Five Points called the Good Samaritan. I had attended a lecture in his church the previous Sunday and had been greatly impressed by the simple warmth of his personality, the kindness and humanity in his voice. I knew instinctively that I could trust Ned with him; that he would look after him. Through eyes that were blurred with tears, I finally managed to write Dr. Ruthledge a note. I told him that I was forced to leave Five Points, and that it would be impossible for me to take my son along. I asked him to see that he was taken care of. Before the minister could come to see me personally, I kissed Ned good-bye, told him that

Mrs. Abe Kransky

Rose Kransky

he would not be left alone for long, and with an aching heart went out into the rainy night.

Then began a series of wanderings which stretched endlessly on into years. No sooner had I left Five Points than Paul began to beg me again to solicit help from my father. I reminded him of his promise, of his pledge to turn over a new leaf; but life seemed too much for my unfortunate husband.

From place to place we wandered like two fugitive souls. When circumstances forced us to stay for any length of time in one place, I would secure employment, while Paul would lay plans for wealth beyond our fondest dreams. At the end of the week however, he would settle for whatever my efforts were able to bring in the form of a pay check.

How I longed for the son I had deserted. At night I dreamed of his chubby arms around my neck. I could feel his soft moist lips as he kissed me before leaving for school. I prayed in an agony of spirit that he was safe; that the Good Samaritan had taken him in and looked after him. I prayed that he should never know nor be ashamed of the man who was his father, nor the woman who was his mother. The mother who had abandoned him to be with his father.

With slow relentless tread the years marched on. Years of struggling, of heartbreak, of restless moving from place to place. Paul had lost all pretense of grandeur now. His extravagant dreams were reduced to shadowy wishes. I still worked when I was able and somehow we managed to exist. Then one day I fell ill and after weeks of hovering between life and death, weeks during which Paul was strangely absent, I finally awakened to the fact that I had sacrificed my life to no purpose. Paul would never change.

There was no longer any sense of trying to reform him. I had done all that I could, the balance of my life was mine to live as I saw fit. I decided to leave Paul. I decided to return once more to Five Points, find out that my son was well, and then go out of his life forever.

But one more humiliation was in store for me. Paul returned and before I could put into effect my decision to leave him, by a ruse he induced me to accompany him to a dress shop, which he told me he had just purchased. He pretended to pay for garments which he placed in my keeping. A short time later, Paul and I were both arrested for disposing of stolen goods. It was then that I changed my name to Fredrika Lang. My ignominy was complete. When I was released from jail a year later, I didn't inquire what had happened to Paul. I left at once for Five Points.

* * * * *

The rhythm of the train wheels seemed to click a pattern of words into my head as I neared my destination, "Ned, Ned, my son Ned." "I wonder how he is. I wonder how he is." "He must never know. He must never know that I'm his mother. He must never know that I'm his mother." In desperation I tried to get away from the maddening rhythm as I made my way to the center of the swaying coach. It was beginning to grow dark. Outside of the heated car a November rain swirled against the window panes. We sped past smokeless factories standing gaunt and cold like the skeleton of a man whose soul had escaped. Had Paul a soul? I wondered. Then I put the thought out of my mind. I must put all thoughts of Paul behind me. I must never think of him again. I tried to focus my attention on the rain soaked ground which whirled before my eyes—there lay an overturned stump of a tree torn from the earth like a huge extracted tooth with protruding roots. I wondered if it had suffered pain. Tearing things out by the roots is always a painful process. I was thinking of Paul again. Would the train never get to Five Points? The last ray of light had faded from the sky. From the distant houses lights began to appear. I thought of a line from *Evangeline,* "Homes of peace and contentment." Paul and I might have had such a home. Paul again! No. Not Paul. Paul is a thing of the past! Only Ned remains, and when I have assured myself that he is well and happy, I shall go away. He shall never know that the lonely woman staring out into the darkness is his mother. The mother whose face is still paled from a year in jail. The train sped on into the night.

* * * * *

It is Christmas Eve, 1937. I have seen Ned from a distance, but I can't resist peeking into the parsonage for another look at the tall manly figure of my son. My son! I can hardly believe it. There he is now. The windowpanes are frosted but I can make him out. He is helping Dr. Ruthledge trim the tree. By his side is some one else—a girl—she is laughing; now Ned turns and kisses her. That must be Mary Ruthledge, the minister's daughter. Oh Ned. You are happy! Your worthless parents haven't brought disgrace into your life. They never will, Ned. I swear they never will! I force myself to turn and walk away.

I trudge through deserted streets. The snow crunches under my feet. Twenty years have passed, I think. Twenty years since I have seen these streets. Yet they haven't changed. The tenement building where I deserted my boy is just the same. The very rooms in which I left him to join Paul have remained unaltered. My conscience pricks me at the thought that I have dared to remain in Five Points. But only for a few days longer—I try to justify myself—just to see Ned from a distance for a few more times. Then I shall go away. Then I shall go away forever.

I pass the second-hand store of Abe Kransky. It, too, is the same. I wonder how many people know how good and kind he really is. His pawn shop reminds me of my brooch. I feel to see if I still have it. My brooch, the one remaining treasure I possess. The last of the heirlooms I inherited from my grandmother. I remember with what reluctance I had pawned it, and my joy at being able to redeem it with the money earned from posing for the strange young artist, Ellis Smith. Ellis Smith—he calls me the unknown woman. I smile rather bitterly at the thought. Yes, the unknown woman. Ned's unknown mother. What would it seem like to talk to Ned? To have him talk to me? What would his voice sound like? I remember a conversation I had had with Dr. Ruthledge only a few days before. Dr. Ruthledge who had recognized me after all these years, and who had told me of Ned's fine future.

I remember him saying, "Fredrika, I have been waiting for you to pay us a visit at the parsonage." "You have, Dr. Ruthledge?" I said surprised. "Of course," he answered. "You're always welcome, you know." "But if Ned should be there?" I questioned.

"I should introduce you to him as Fredrika Lang, since you don't care to reveal the fact that you are his mother."

"I don't know, Dr. Ruthledge," I answered. "I should like nothing more than to be near Ned, if only for a few minutes, but I'm afraid."

He smiled in his sympathetic way, and continued, "We are having a few people in to dinner next week. If you should care to join us, just let Ellen know."

If I should care to join them! My heart beats faster as I conjure up a mental image of myself seated at the same table with Ned. Should I risk it? I debate the question with myself:—"Ned wouldn't know that I'm his mother —could I do him any harm?" I finally convince myself that it would be all right. The snow crunches more rapidly under my feet as I hurry to my room in the tenement building. I shall write Ellen a note tonight. I shall talk with my son at last.

* * * * *

Dinner is over. I have sat self conscious and a little shy all during the meal. I have not been able to take my eyes off of Ned. He is so proud, so confident. He has received a royalty check from his first novel. I have read it, but I don't like to think about it. I had hurt my son deeper than I thought when I deserted him. His writing is filled with a strange bitterness. He despises his mother. Despises his mother?—how could that be? I'm his mother. He doesn't despise me. He is talking to me now. I detect a note of affection in his voice. He likes me—he is drawn to me— I feel it. He would like to know me better;—then suddenly I am afraid. He mustn't know me better. I mustn't allow it. I must leave Five Points, quickly—tomorrow, or as soon as possible. I have hurt him once, I must never come into his life again. Some one is talking to me, what are they saying?

"That's a lovely brooch you're wearing, Mrs. Lang." It's Mary speaking. I must answer her. "Thank you, Mary." "May I see it?" she asks.

I unfasten the clasp. A thought of Paul flashes through my mind. How often had he urged me to pawn it. What was it that strengthened my determination to keep it? Could it have been because I would now be able to give at least this one thing to my son? No. Not to him, but to Mary, the girl my son is going to marry. My son marry? Why Ned is only a baby. Mary is speaking again.

"Here it is, Mrs. Lang. I've never seen anything quite so beautiful."

"Would you like to have it, Mary?" I offer. Her face flushes with gratitude. "You're too kind. No, really I couldn't think of accepting it as a gift." "For a wedding present," I urge her. Ned answers. "No, I agree with Mary. That's much too valuable a gift." The subject is changed.

Ned walks with me over the icy sidewalks. His strong young arm supports me as I slip on the treacherous curbstone. I thank him, and he laughs gaily as we proceed to the tenement building. As we say good night, he says:

"Mrs. Lang, would you mind if I stopped over to see you tomorrow?"

"Of course not," I tell him, hardly able to keep a note of gladsome fear from creeping into my voice.

"I'll see you then," he says brightly, and calls over his shoulder, "Good night."

The next day I was able to think of nothing else. My mind kept going back to the evening before. Ned's voice kept ringing in my ears. I wondered why he had asked me if he might come to see me. Was there still some far away memory tucked in the childish recesses of his mind which drew him to me? Did he sense that I was not what I pretended to be? I must not allow him to draw me out. I must keep my identity a secret, and yet, as the hours passed by, I kept looking anxiously at the clock. Would he forget to come? I wanted to know him better. I made up a conversation which I would have with him. He would be seated there. That was the most comfortable chair. I would ask him if he wouldn't like some tea. I would congratulate him on his fiancée. His face would light up with happiness. He would talk to me unreservedly, unafraid. I would inspire confidence. I would know the thoughts of my little boy grown to manhood. I glanced again at the clock. Had he forgotten? Oh God! give me this one little happiness. Let me talk to my son.

There was a firm young tread outside my door; a knock, and Ned was in the room. His eyes rested on me affectionately for a moment. Such blue eyes, I thought. Like mine. Not like Paul's. Nothing about him is like Paul. Ned's voice brought me back to reality.

"I hope I'm not disturbing you, Mrs. Lang."

"Disturbing me? Of course not." I answered. "I've been sitting here waiting for you."

"I intended to come sooner," he admitted, "but I had a newspaper assignment to cover. I won't take up much of your time."

Oh do, Ned, I thought. Take up a lot of my time. Don't go away. Stay here and talk to me. I said aloud, "You're welcome to stay as long as you like, Mr. Holden. As a matter of fact, I'm rather a stranger here. I'd enjoy having you come often." Fool, I thought instantly to myself. You're playing with fire. He mustn't come here often. You must go away from here and never see him again.

He answered, "Well thanks, Mrs. Lang. In that case

I'll be a frequent visitor. But what I wanted to see you about today was that brooch you showed Mary last night."

"Yes?"

"You were kind enough to offer to give it to her. As I told you it's much too valuable a gift, but I wonder if you'd mind selling it."

"I'd rather not," I told him.

"Oh, I know how you feel," he laughed, "you'd much rather Mary would accept it as a wedding present. But I'm the one who's going to marry her. I'm the one who should be giving her presents." He's proud, I thought, like his grandfather.

"Frankly, I've been at a loss as to just what I could buy for Mary. I'm like all the rest of the men—always afraid I'll pick out some silly thing that no one could have the slightest use for. But when I saw Mary admire that brooch last night, I knew immediately that nothing would please her more than to have it. I don't suppose I can pay you what it's really worth, but if you'd be willing to accept a hundred dollars for it, it would make me very happy."

How engaging he is, I thought. He interpreted my silence for indecision.

"You see, Mrs. Lang, the reason I suggested buying it for a hundred dollars, is because I just received that sum as the first royalty on my book. It's sort of a milestone in my life. I'd like to spend it on something which Mary could always have."

"I know," I said softly.

"I hope you won't think me insistent," he continued, "but I have the check with me——"

He paused and looked rather hopefully at me.

"Of course, Mr. Holden," I answered. "If that's the way you feel, I should be only too glad to sell it to you.

As you say, it's something that Mary can always keep, and although I can't tell you the reason, I shall be very proud to know that your wife will be wearing a brooch which I once owned."

With eyes that smiled his gratitude, he tendered me the check, and with an expression of relief on his face deposited the brooch in his pocket. He refused my invitation to stay for tea, but he told me he would be back to see me soon again. Little did I anticipate the pain and heartbreak which his next visit would bring me.

A few days later, I was startled by a knock at my door. In response to my anxious question, "Who is there?" I heard the mocking voice of my husband.

Quickly opening the door, I admitted him and confronted him with the words:

"Paul, what are you doing here? What do you want?"

"It wasn't like you, Fredrika, to walk out of my life," he drawled. "You see, I even know your new name. Not Frances Holden, but Fredrika Lang. I must remember to always call you Fredrika in the future. I have gone to quite some considerable pains to find you." He paused. "Well, aren't you going to invite me to sit down?"

"Paul, you're not welcome here," I told him. "After what you've done you should be ashamed to even look at me. I promised myself that I should never see you again. You and I are finished, Paul. In the future you'll have to go your own way."

As though he had not heard a word I spoke, he seated himself calmly in a chair. The same chair where Ned had sat only a few days before. His manner became more irritating as he continued,

"I flatter myself that I've done a rather neat job of detective work in finding you, Fredrika. When I discovered that you had been released from your last—shall we say, boarding house—and by the way we really have something in common now. I speculated as to where you might have gone. I couldn't quite picture you setting out without having some definite objective in view. I've come to know the workings of your mind pretty well by this time. Then suddenly it came to me. You would like to see your son again, and my deduction was correct. Here you are, back in Five Points."

"Yes," I told him bitterly, "here we are back in Five Points. This is where I should have stayed twenty years ago. I was a fool to have ever listened to your lies, your promises——"

"Now don't reproach yourself, my dear." He formed the words with a crooked smile on his lips. Had those lips ever clung warmly to my own? The thought revolted me.

He seemed strangely confident of himself as he asked me:

"Well, have you seen Ned?"

I spoke without thinking of the consequences:

"Yes, Paul, I've seen Ned. With no thanks to either you or me, he has grown into a fine young man. Dr. Ruthledge has raised him from the time we left. He has a brilliant future ahead of him. He's engaged to be married, and for this I thank God, he has no knowledge of who his parents are."

"That's very interesting, Fredrika," Paul answered. "A brilliant future. That's what I might have had if I hadn't married you."

"Paul, how dare you?" I gasped.

"It's true, my dear," he sneered. "I had no idea when I first proposed marriage to you that you would be so obstinate about securing me at least a little money to start me on my way. But it's still not too late. After all these years, your father might even now relent enough to make you a worthwhile gift."

"I don't care to talk about that, Paul," I told him.

"No, Fredrika, you never have cared to talk about that. But tell me what is this brilliant future of our son's?"

Again I spoke without thinking. "He has just had his first novel published."

"Oh, he's gone into the literary field. Well, that can be highly remunerative." He allowed a speculative smile to play about his mouth, and I was struck with a sudden feeling of dread.

He continued, "But to get back to ourselves, now that we're here, what do you propose to do?"

"I don't think that should interest you, Paul," I answered. "I've told you that you and I have come to the parting of the ways. What I do from now on is no concern of yours."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that, Fredrika." There was a definite menace in his eyes that I had never seen before. "If you think I intend to sit calmly by while you dismiss me from your future existence, you are rather sadly mistaken. Do you intend to remain here in Five Points?"

"No," I told him quickly. "I came here as you suspected to see our son, but I don't intend to remain here. I am leaving in a few days."

"I wouldn't be in such a hurry," he insinuated. "There are worse places to live. Your suite here isn't too prepossessing, but I think I could stand it for awhile."

"You can't stay here, Paul," I told him.

"And why not," he asked, "After all we're legally married."

"It's not that," I answered. "I've told you, Paul, that you and I are finished. You may go where you please, do what you like, but you can't remain here. Ned has been here to see me, he may come again before I leave. I've told him my husband is dead."

"Rather an unkind way to dispose of a faithful husband," he drawled. "However, I have no intention of leaving Five Points. If you find my company so objectionable, I shall try to find other quarters. I believe it will be necessary though to ask you for a small loan."

"Paul, you're despicable," I told him. "Will you leave Five Points when I do?"

"That remains to be seen." I could see he was formulating a plan, and my anxiety increased. "I think I might be induced to leave, but in the meantime, as I said, I shall need some money."

Trying hard to keep my feelings under control, I gave him five dollars which he assured me would suffice for a day or two. His parting words were:

"I shall expect a more substantial sum when I call again. Perhaps you had better try to do something about it."

After he had gone I sat for hours motionless in my chair. Paul's hateful scheme was as clear to me as though he had actually revealed his plan. His conniving mind had already seized upon Ned as the next victim from whom he could extort money. Bitterly I reproached myself for having told him of Ned's success. I was fearful of what his next step would be. Fearful of what might become of Ned's future if we were revealed as his parents.

Then I thought of the check which Ned had given me for the brooch. Would this be sufficient to change Paul's mind? If I gave that to him and promised to go away with him, would he leave Ned alone? I determined to risk it.

When Paul came again I would give him the check and arrange to meet him some place away from Five Points. My spirit shrank at the thought that I was condemned to spend the rest of my life in the company of a man whom I now wholeheartedly despised. But no sacrifice was too great that would insure the future welfare of my son.

Paul accepted the bribe willingly enough. I told him I had finally sold my brooch to secure the money. He promised he would go away and write me where he expected me to meet him. For the first time in days I breathed easier. For the present at least Ned was safe. Then came a blow which fell with such cruel swiftness that I was left stunned and helpless from the shock.

A strange Ned Holden burst into my room a few days later. On his face was the expression of a hurt child who has been disappointed in someone. He ignored my invitation to be seated, and opened the conversation by saying:

"I thought perhaps you'd have left Five Points by this time." Rather surprised at his tone of voice, I answered:

"Left Five Points? Why—why, Ned,—I—I don't understand."

The bitter line about his mouth touched my heart, as he said:

"You don't understand?"

"Why no," I told him. "Is there something wrong? The way you're talking!——"

His eyes were hard and cold. "How do you expect me to talk under the circumstances?"

"Under what circumstances?" I asked.

"Please, Mrs. Lang. It isn't necessary for you to pretend any longer. That check has been cleared through my bank."

I was scarcely able to breathe, "The check?"

He ignored my interruption—"The check that I gave you—the one that you managed to have raised to a thousand dollars. A very neat job, Mrs. Lang. You needn't look so innocent. Don't tell me, please, that you had nothing to do with the raising of the check. You gave it to a man who endorsed it—a man whose name is Paul Burns."

I stared uncomprehendingly for a moment. "Ned, you believe—" His voice was harsh with unwept tears, "I believe that you're one of the smoothest crooks I've run into in a long time. I've got more respect for the man who goes out and steals, but a woman who will use the fact that she is a woman to take somebody for a ride is one of the lowest, most despicable things I can think of."

In an agony of spirit, I cried out, "Please—please, don't say any more."

But he continued: "I haven't very much more to say." He tossed the heirloom on the floor. "Here's your brooch, Mrs. Lang—maybe some day you can use that pretty trinket on some other sucker." The door slammed and he was gone. In a voice that was little more than a whisper, I sobbed. "Ned—Ned, I didn't do it—I didn't do it. Good God, my son—my son!"

How long I remained looking out of my window with unseeing eyes, I do not know. Gradually, however, my numbed senses returned to torture me like an aching tooth. Paul had struck the last nail into my crucified soul. The one memory which I might have carried away with me was gone. My son had called me a thief. Life was over for me. Perhaps it was just as well; with Ned's denunciations burned forever into my brain, I would never again be tempted to see him. But I would prevent Paul from ever seeing him. I would go to him the moment that he wrote, and travel with him far away from Five Points.

Ned—Ned would be safe. That was all that mattered, after all.

Three days passed without a word from Paul. Perhaps there is enough shame left in him, I thought, to make him repent of what he's done. I considered going away by myself, but I rejected the thought when I remembered that the thousand dollars would soon be spent, and then Paul might return to Five Points. No. I would wait until I heard from him.

I crossed restlessly to the window. The leaden sky was pregnant with rain. A warm wind had changed the bleak January day into April mildness. The street below was covered with a dirty slush. A long low rumbling of thunder shook the universe like a belch from the belly of some ancient god. In the west were flashes of lightning. I remembered how I had feared the lightning when I was a child. How I used to cover my head with the bedclothes. Now I knew there was no longer anything to fear. No barbed death from those flashes could touch the thing that was already dead within me. If I only could die, I thought, but then I remembered that I mustn't die. There was still one thing that I must do. I must still protect Ned from his father.

The storm had started to break. The low clouds swept by with ever increasing speed as though pursued by phantom demons. The soft whine of the wind became a raging tempest. Rain spattered in spasmodic gusts against the window pane, and the sash rattled with the force of the gale. A part of the fury of the elements seemed to find a place in me as I started to draw the shade. My act was interrupted by a soft tap on the door. I crossed the room and opened it. There before me was my husband, Paul.

My first impulse was to shriek at him—to pour out my anger in a stream of ugly words—but reason restrained me. If he were seen here now he would be arrested; an arrest might bring out the fact that he was Ned's father! I closed the door behind him.

As he stood there wearing an enigmatic smile, I asked him, "Paul, why did you do it? Why did you do it?"

"Why did I do what, Fredrika?"

"Why did you raise that check to a thousand dollars? Answer me, why did you do it?"

His eyes flickered, "I don't know what you're talking about, my dear."

"Oh yes you do, Paul," I insisted. "You took that hundred dollar check that I gave you to go away. You raised it to a thousand dollars and you cashed it. Ned was here and told me about it. He accused me—he accused me, his mother, of having swindled him."

His expression assumed that innocent look I knew so well. "I assure you, Fredrika, that I had nothing to do with the raising of any check. If the figures on the check were changed, it was done before you gave it to me."

Once I might almost have believed him, he lied so plausibly, but now I replied: "So that's it. If you were caught, you intended to throw the blame on me."

He seemed to take a cruel delight in waiting before he spoke. "What possible difference could it make, Fredrika, which one of us raised the check? We're Ned's parents. He wouldn't prosecute us." I stood transfixed at the implication of his words.

Finally I managed to ask him, "Paul, what did you say?"

"I said, my dear, that I think it's about time Ned knew who his parents were."

He was openly defiant. In a feverish frenzy of fear, the words which I had struggled to hold back tumbled out in a cascade of hate. "Paul," I raged, "you don't know what you're saying. Are you suggesting that you came back here deliberately to tell Ned who we are? Are you low enough, mean enough, despicable enough to want to ruin another life besides mine and your own? What has happened in the past concerns only you and me. What we've done, we've done to each other, but what you're contemplating now is too infamous—too vile for words! You'd make him pay with his youth, his ambition and his happiness for your own worthlessness. No, Paul, I won't permit that. We'll forget the check—we'll forget everything you've ever done in the past; but we'll go away from Five Points, —and we'll never come back. Ned is never to know who we are. Do you understand that? Never!"

My words made no impression on him. "Never is a long time, Fredrika. As long as our son is doing so well, I can't see why he shouldn't want to help his parents. No, I don't think it would be well to leave Five Points at the moment."

I had reached the breaking point. My voice was shrill with hatred. "Stop it! Do you hear me? Stop it! I can't stand it any longer. Liar—thief—I hate you—I hate you as I thought it wasn't possible to hate any human being."

Paul shrugged his shoulders. "Becoming hysterical, Fredrika, isn't going to help matters any. Surely you realize that."

His words brought me back to earth. I was suddenly very calm—with the calmness of desperation. "Paul," I said, "you and I are leaving Five Points. Now! Today!"

Blood rushed to my head at his slow contemptuous smile and sneering answer.

"Speak for yourself, Fredrika. You may go if you like; *I* intend to stay."

We faced each other for a moment, neither speaking. His eyes held steady. I felt weak and helpless. Then suddenly I was determined that Paul Holden would never leave that room alive. My head whirling with the strength of my resolve, I reeled to a desk and pulled open a drawer.

Paul followed me with his eyes. With a note of mild amusement in his voice, he asked. "Why are you opening that drawer?" As my hand closed over a cold steel object, I answered, "I've had this for some time. I've been saving it for just this purpose."

He laughed derisively, "A revolver?"

"Yes, Paul—a revolver."

The mocking left his voice as he said more threateningly, "Put it away, Fredrika. As I've said on several occasions, dramatics don't become you. I've made up my mind exactly what I'm going to do. It's taken me a long time to come to a definite decision, but I've finally made up my mind to see Ned."

I raised the revolver. The figure which had seem blurred and misty only a moment before now loomed clear in front of me. It was Paul, my husband, and I was going to kill him. He started to advance, I pressed the trigger. The explosion seemed to drown out my words.

"You'll never see Ned."

A look of incredulous amazement seemed to come over Paul's face. He started to speak. Another explosion filled the room. He seemed about to come towards me. Instinctively my finger curled again. Paul slumped forward on his knees. I was conscious of my own voice as it repeated over and over again, "No, Paul Holden, you'll never see Ned. No. Paul Holden, you'll never see Ned."

Outside a low rumble of thunder seemed to echo the shots that I had fired. An everwidening crimson circle stained the floor where Paul lay dead. Now I was sure at last that Ned would never know who his father was.

* * * * *

Through the barred window of my cell I can make out the frosty rim of a crescent moon. The first day of my trial for the murder of Paul Burns is over. I am not conscious of what took place. I remember as if in a dream the drone of lawyer's voices as they examined prospective jurors. Why must I sit there day after day? What is there to gain? I have taken my husband's life. Although no one but Dr. Ruthledge knows that he was my husband, I am willing to pay the penalty. Why did Dr. Ruthledge and Ellis Smith insist that I plead innocent? Why has Ellis Smith engaged a lawyer for me? An expensive lawyer, I am told. How can he afford to do that? I know he has very little money. What is the use of it all?

Day follows day while the endless stream of testimony beats against my tired, tortured brain. I have lost all track of time. I have watched the moon swell, then shrink and once again become a shimmering scimitar of silver. My attorney is worried about the case. This morning he asked me if there is anything I have neglected to tell him that would be useful to bring out in my defense. I told him I had nothing to say. I will never, never try to save my life at Ned's expense. I will never let it be known that I killed his father rather than bring disgrace and ruin into my son's life. I saw Ned in the court room today. My heart quailed at the hateful look in his eye. I wanted to reach out and touch his coat but I controlled myself. Oh God, grant that my son will not take the stand against his own mother. That would be almost too much to bear.

* * * * *

Tonight I am in a different cell. It is removed from the others, but there is no window. I shall miss the moon. In another two weeks it would be full. Another two weeks and I shall not know the difference. Today I was sentenced to die in the electric chair for the murder of my husband. I can't even recall the date but I know it will be soon.

How quickly the time passed now that I knew I was about to die. I hugged the days to me, weaving them in and out of my memory like a string of precious pearls. And yet, I was conscious of a vast relief. The trial was over. No longer would I be forced to sit day after day while attorneys debated what my fate should be. Of what possible use was my life? It was better ended. Ellis Smith came to see me. He looked tired and disappointed. I tried my best to cheer him up. I told him I had no wish other than to die. He had guessed my secret. He knew the identity of the man I killed. He knew Ned was my son. I swore him to secrecy, as I had done with Dr. Ruthledge before my trial started. Dr. Ruthledge paid me a visit shortly after Ellis left. He, too, looked worn and weary. He had done so much for me. He had testified in my behalf, he had defied the criticism of the community by taking the stand for me. Now he begged me as a last resort to change my mind about protecting Ned. He urged me to tell the truth about the murder, but again I was forced to refuse him.

And then one morning I knew the time had come when I was to make my last journey. I was taken from my cell and brought to a little room just off the execution chamber. Instead of the iron cot to which I had become accustomed, the room was furnished with a bed. On the wall was a picture of the "Last Supper." I thanked God in my heart for the window from which I could glimpse for the last time the world I was about to leave. I could see a bit of green, for, all unknown to me, spring had come and summer was setting in. I could smell the virginal earth now ripe to be wooed by the season. The frosty, indifferent moon I had seen from the cell upstairs, now looked down almost tenderly as I prayed by the side of my bed.

"O God, whose mercy is great, have mercy on me, a sinner."

From a distant steeple the clock chimed the hour.

"O God, whose mercy is great, have mercy on me, a sinner."

From the corridor I heard footsteps, "O God, give me strength to face that which lies before me." The footsteps grew louder. I arose from my knees and stood waiting. My cell door opened and through the shadow cast by a blue incandescent lamp, some one said:

"Mrs. Lang, you have been pardoned by the Governor."

I could scarcely believe my ears. "Pardoned, I don't under—"

The voice broke through the gloom. "I don't know the details. I have come to tell you that you are a free woman."

I sank once more to my knees. I wanted to pray, but only one prayer remained in my memory. One that I had learned when I was a little girl.

"Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever and ever. Amen."

The next morning I came out into the light of day with the prison smell still in my nostrils, but welcoming in my heart another chance for life. I spent the day in my room. The dark stain had not been removed from the rug and gave mute testimony to the tragedy which had taken place. "But not in vain," I murmured to myself, "not in vain"—for my secret was safe at last. Ned would never be blackmailed by his worthless father.

That evening I went over to the parsonage. I waited until it was dark and rang the bell. Dr. Ruthledge came in answer to the ring.

"Fredrika!" he greeted me, as he opened the door.

"Are you alone, Dr. Ruthledge?" I asked him.

"Yes," he replied, "Mary and Ned have just gone out." He didn't know, nor did I, that Mary had returned and gone upstairs and that Ned was standing on the porch just beyond the open window.

"Dr. Ruthledge," I said. "What did you tell the Governor that you were able to secure my pardon?"

"The truth, Fredrika, the truth," he answered, "I told the Governor your story. I told him that what you did, you did for your son."

"I can never thank you enough, Dr. Ruthledge. Now I can go away from Five Points secure in the knowledge that Ned will never know that I'm his mother. I can go away and leave my son to his happiness."

To our horror, the door opened and Ned stood before us. Mary and Dr. Ruthledge have told you the rest. With eyes that blazed hatred my son loosed a tirade against me, while with each word he spoke my spirit winced as though it were being struck with a lash. Ned knew his mother at last, and with words of hatred he denounced her for what she was. A thief and a murderess. His final words will ring in my ears forever.

"You don't have to leave Five Points, Fredrika Lang. I'm getting out. I'm getting out of the whole mess."

Will the coming years soften Ned's heart? Will he ever come to realize that I never meant to bring harm to his life? Will he come back and let me put my arms around him once more before I die? Only time can tell. In the meantime, I remain in my little room, haunted with the ghosts of the past and pray that no harm will befall him.

* * * * *

Dr. Ruthledge has asked me to add one more paragraph to my life's story. My son, Ned, has returned to Five Points. I have not seen him, but I have met his wife. His wife! They can never be happy together. How my heart aches for Mary Ruthledge. I am still waiting and hoping that some day Ned will come to see me of his own accord. I want to know that he understands and forgives me. Somehow—somehow, I know why Ned turned to this girl whom he married. I can't help but blame myself for this latest tragedy in my son's life.

CHAPTER

V

ROSE KRANSKY

As I turn the succeeding pages over to Rose Kransky, my mind wanders back to my early days in Five Points. I see the second hand store of Abe Kransky, and before me comes the picture of the prettiest little girl in the neighborhood playing light-heartedly on the sidewalk. I hear her mother calling "Rose," and I know that the child with the lustrous brown eyes and lovely blond curls will answer, "Yes, Ma," for she is an obedient child. I remember my thoughts at the time. I remember speculating as to the future of this girl born in Five Points of Orthodox Jewish parents. Would they be able to adapt themselves to her modern American ways as she grew older? But I shall let Rose tell her own story.

I am Rose Kransky. For as long as I can remember, I have always hated Five Points. I have always hated what it represents. Poverty, gossipy neighbors, sordid surroundings and no chance to get ahead. I love my parents as deeply as any daughter could, but I could never get them to understand me. I have always had a deep fear that I should never be able to escape from the environment into which I was born. When the chance came I hurried to accept it. My life was my own. I had a right to do what I wanted with it. If things haven't worked out the way I expected them to—well that's pretty much my own affair. I've never asked for pity. I've never wasted any of it on myself. I was ambitious—perhaps too much so. I have loved a man—a man who by the standards of Five Points I had no right to love. If I have defied convention, if I have refused to be governed by the same orthodox rules which govern the lives of my parents, it is because I am and always will be an individual. If I am hurt, as an individual, I must try to bear that hurt alone. That is my philosophy, my creed. Ellis Smith refused to let me bear my hurt alone. By the ordinary standards of the world I suppose I should be grateful to him for shielding me from the criticism of society. I'm not sure that I am. I accepted his aid in a moment when I scarcely knew what I was doing. Love can upset the emotional stability of even an individual. But let me start my story where it rightfully belongs, at the beginning.

I started to school when I was five years old.

As I passed through grade after grade, I became conscious that I had a quick brain. I began to make an effort to excell in whatever I did. I received a great deal of satisfaction in leading my class each year. Aside from my interest in books nothing of great importance happened during my early schooling.

After I had started to high school, however, I began to use my eyes a little more. Some of the girls who had graduated with me were forced to give up their studies. Their parents were poor, and they were needed at home to look after their younger brothers and sisters. I had a younger brother too, by this time, Jacob. I hoped my mother and father wouldn't decide that I should stay at home. I had already rehearsed a number of arguments against the idea, but although we were also very poor, I was allowed to go on with my schooling. Why was I given the opportunity rather than others? I thought, but I decided that it was too difficult a question to answer. I half answered it with the thought that I wanted it more than the others, and I then and there decided that whatever I might want if I could make myself want it more than anybody else, I could have it.

Each evening when classes were dismissed, I would help my father in his secondhand store. I liked to rummage through the various things which had been pawned and wonder what their owners might have been like. Perhaps the object which made me spin my longest and most complicated dream was the old grandfather's clock, which stood in the back of the store. I had never seen one before and I knew that no ordinary family in Five Points could possess such a rich looking piece of furniture. Where had it come from? I asked my father the question several times, until he grew impatient of saying he didn't know. I pictured it as standing in a library filled with books, all bound with costly leather. I could see a butler moving quietly in and out with decanters of expensive wines, and trays of delicious food. Women in furs moved charmingly about, and men dressed as I had seen Francis Bushman in the movies would be bending over and kissing their hands. Then I could see the rich man's son telling his father that he was in love with a poor girl. I could see the look of anger on the old man's face as he ordered him out of the house. I could hear the son ask one last request—that he be permitted to take the grandfather clock with him. The young man married the poor girl, but he had been so accustomed to a life of ease that he was unable to support her. She moved to Five Points, taking the clock with her and was forced to sell it to my father.

Having successfully disposed of the story behind the clock, in my own mind at least, I would put the story back together again as it might affect me. The rich I decided had things too easy. The poor had things too hard. But the poor had a better chance to make something of themselves because they had learned to fight for what they wanted. When the rich got into trouble they didn't know what to do about it. I was suddenly glad I was poor. I would fight for what I wanted. I would make use of my training to better myself. Then I would take Pa and Ma along with me, out of Five Points with its noise and confusion, away from the dirt and squalor, into a new world where we could look out from behind clean windows onto a yard covered with grass and sprinkled with flowers.

At about this point in my day dreaming, I would be recalled to reality by the voice of my father, asking me to help him with his figures.

I made very few friends among my classmates. I liked Mary Ruthledge, who was the daughter of the man they called the Good Samaritan. Whenever I could I would go home with her. I liked their house. It was always cool and clean. I liked Ellen, their housekeeper, too, and Dr. Ruthledge. Sometimes I would sit talking with Mary in her room while mentally comparing it with my own. Our apartment was small and shabby. Not that most of the apartments in the tenement building weren't as bad, or worse, but I felt that we should have something better.

On summer evenings after I had helped Ma with the dishes and when Pa didn't need me at the store, I would walk slowly down the street in the direction of the parsonage. I sometimes hoped that Mary would be out some place with Ned Holden, the boy who lived with them, so that I could talk with Dr. Ruthledge alone. He seemed so kind, so understanding. I was able to confide in him as in no one else. He treated my problems seriously, as though they belonged to a grown up person and not a high-school girl. When I complained that my future looked pretty uncertain, that the opportunities in Five Points were not ones that would stir the imagination of anyone who had ambition, he advised me to be patient.

"Finish your schooling, Rose," he told me, "and then we'll see what can be done."

Mary and I received our diplomas together. Ma and Pa and Jacob all sat in the front row. Jacob was going to school now, too, and even as I sat with my classmates, I was wondering how we were going to afford to buy him that new pair of shoes he needed so badly. What could I do to help the family income? Pa wanted me to work in the store, but there was only so much business to be had no matter if I was there or not, and aside from keeping the books and making the long hours a little easier for him, there would be no more money in the house than there was now. If I could get an office job I could help out, but there weren't any offices in Five Points except the paint factory and they only used girls who were trained stenographers. Why couldn't I learn to be a stenographer? I couldn't expect Pa to pay out any money for my education, of course. It was hard enough for him to buy Ma the material to make my graduation dress. But maybe if I could see my way to going to night school! The idea appealed to me. I would talk to them about it on the way home.

Ma kissed me when I came off the stage with my diploma held loosely in my hand, so as not to crush it. Pa was proud of me although he didn't say much, and Jacob thought it was all very exciting, and kept talking about when he would be big enough to graduate. When I could get a word in edgeways, I told them what I was thinking about, how I would like to help Pa out during the day and study shorthand at night.

"For why do you want shorthand," Pa said. "If in the store you want to work, all right. But then married you should get, and have children. Babies you can't bring up on no typewriter."

"But Pa," I pointed out, "I don't want to get married for a long time yet. I want to get ahead. I want to be somebody. I don't want to have to bring up babies in a tenement building."

"So what's the matter with the tenement building?"

"That's just the trouble, Pa," I told him. "You don't see anything wrong with it. You think it's all right. Just because you're satisfied with it, you think I ought to be satisfied too. Well, I'm not, and I don't intend to be. I don't want to live in a dirty old apartment forever."

"Rose!" Ma started to say something, but Pa cut her off.

"That's enough, Rose! I don't want my daughter should be getting such ideas in her head. Where we live, that's where you live, until the time comes when you should be married. I don't want to hear no more about it."

A few days later I managed to find Dr. Ruthledge alone in his study. I told him what I would like to do and how my parents felt about it. He promised that he would talk to them and try to convince them that many girls went out into the world to earn their own living and there was no reason why I shouldn't have an equal opportunity. He asked me:

"Have you thought about the tuition, Rose?"

I realized that I hadn't stopped to consider that Pa would expect me to work in the store for nothing and that night schools cost money. He must have seen my face fall, for he continued:

"If you haven't, I just wanted to tell you that I should be glad to help you out. You can consider it as a loan and when you have graduated and have started to earn money of your own, you can pay me back."

I don't know what Dr. Ruthledge said to my parents to make them consent to my going, but when summer was over, Ma came to me one day with an enrollment blank from a night school which was about to begin its fall semester.

"Here, Rose," she said, "Dr. Ruthledge asked me to give this to you. Maybe me and your papa was wrong. Maybe Dr. Ruthledge is right. Maybe it's a good thing for a girl to learn them things you told us you wanted to study."

I had won my first victory over Five Points. I had taken my first step away from the life I was determined at all costs to avoid. I wouldn't be like the other girls who were even now making plans to marry and settle down to raise their children as their parents had raised them. I was going to get ahead. I was going to carve out a life of my own choosing.

For the next two years I worked in Pa's store during the day and studied at night to be a stenographer. Several times Pa went to a great deal of trouble to bring young men whom he liked into the store, or up to our apartment for dinner. I pretended a total indifference to their presence, and although Pa was annoyed at my attitude, few of them ventured to pay a second call.

Dave Herman, however, was not so easily discouraged. He had been several years ahead of me in grammar school, but had left school to work in a fish market owned by his father. He had gotten along better than most of the boys whom I knew in Five Points, and he was quite convinced that he would make me an ideal husband. Ma and Pa thought so too. One night I let him take me to a dance. We drove there in his car which had a peculiar odor of fish, although he assured me he never used it for business. The dance was held at a place called the "Green Dragon," which was a cheap imitation of a smart night club. The orchestra consisted of a saxophone, piano and drum, the entertainer was a bleached and jaded looking blonde who sang blues songs through her nose. Between dances Dave tried to hold my hand under the table. At first I was inclined to draw it away, and then I thought what difference does it make? This is his idea of a large evening, let him enjoy himself. But it convinced me that it was far from the thing that I wanted. I was slightly disgusted by the actions of the girls, some laughing in a raucous manner, others simpering up into the faces of their escorts while they clung to them in a suggestive manner. "This, then, is their idea of a good time in Five Points," I thought. "Those boys are the future husbands of these silly girls—their children will be the next generation of the community." I told Dave I was tired and asked him to take me home early. I never went to a dance again. Dave tried to kiss me when we said goodnight, but I told him I wasn't as cheap as the girls he was used to going out with. I can still remember the hurt look on his blotched red face, but I didn't care. I wanted to hurt him. I wanted to hurt life for showing me its shabby side. I went to bed and lay awake thinking of the futility of life in Five Points.

When I had finished my course at night school I secured a position in the office of the Cunningham Publishing Company. My salary was twenty dollars a week. Ma was very proud when I told her about it, but Pa, as usual, was inclined to look at it from a gloomy side; he said:

"Twenty dollars a week, Rose? For a girl that's too much."

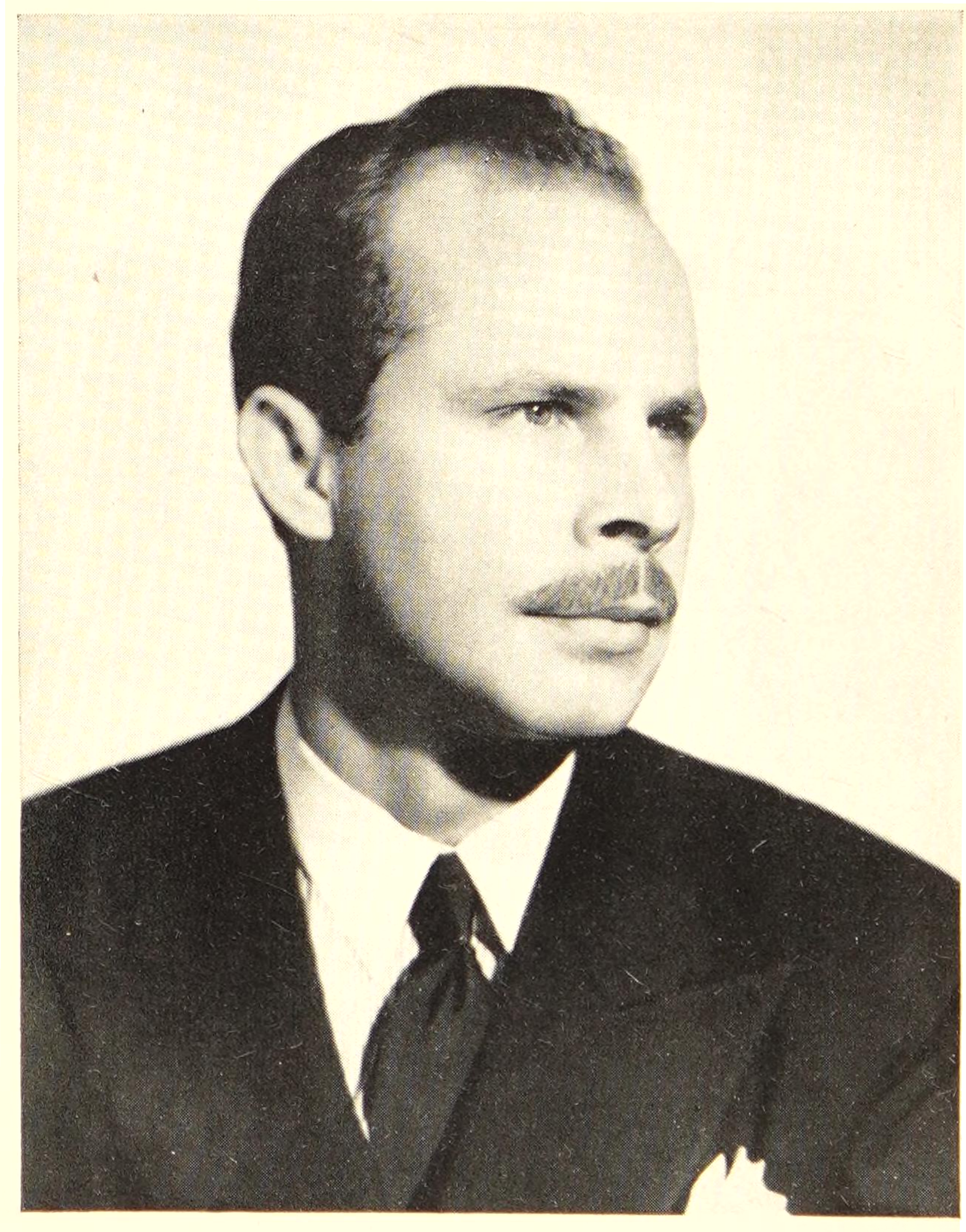
When Ma pointed out that conditions in America were different than they were in the old country, he continued to complain:

"Different the conditions may be, but the girls they are the same. Mothers they're supposed to be—not typewriters. You keep the money that you earn, Rose. We can get along without help."

But Ma knew that I was anxious to do my share at home, and, without telling Pa, she let me give her a part of my salary every week. I also started to pay Dr. Ruthledge for the money he had advanced for my schooling, but I was still able to buy myself enough clothes to keep from being ashamed in front of the other girls at the office.

But I didn't make friends easily. There were about a dozen stenographers employed in the one office. Their chief topic of conversation was men, and I felt strangely left out. But I consoled myself with the thought that I was doing my work well, and that was the most important thing to be considered. From time to time there would be a general laugh when the name Helen Ryder was mentioned. I was curious and asked one of the girls about her. I learned that she was Charles Cunningham's private secretary, and that she hoped he was going to marry her. Girls are funny, I thought to myself, the others are jealous because she has a better job and because her boss is fond of her. I had never seen Charles Cunningham but the girls

Jacob Kransky



Ellis Smith

told me he was very attractive. I used to wonder about him sometimes when I was home in the tenement building.

One day Helen Ryder had some typing which had to be finished in a hurry, so she asked me to do it. When I had finished and brought it into her private office, she commented on my neatness and accuracy, and whenever she wanted anything done from then on, she always brought it to me. We became very friendly and several times she invited me to have lunch with her. She used to talk to me about Charles Cunningham and I could tell that she was very much in love with him.

I still continued to see a good deal of Dr. Ruthledge. I would sit in his study with him and talk about my job and my chances of getting ahead. I told him that if a business career didn't seem to be the answer to what I wanted, I might be interested in going on the stage. Dr. Ruthledge didn't discourage the idea, but he told me to continue with what I was doing, and if I had time I could try amateur theatricals on the side. In that way I would be able to find out if I really had talent or not. He loaned me several books which he thought might be helpful and he bought me one by the Russian stage director, Stanislawsky. He never failed to help me only once, and that one time I refused to listen to his advice. But I shall tell about that later.

Some time before, I had met a man named Ellis Smith who was a newcomer to Five Points. He lived in the same tenement building that we did. He was the first man near my own age that I could talk to. He used to draw sketches that I thought were very good, and in spite of Pa's objections I spent much of my time in his company. There was something about him which kept me from ever getting to know him very well—really know him that is. I was attracted to him in a mental kind of way, and I liked to get into discussions with him, but he always seemed to be able to keep me at a distance. He had an irritating way sometimes of making me feel sort of inferior to him. I became conscious of my background. I felt that I was lacking in the polish which seemed to be so much a part of him. I listened to the way he spoke, and I criticized to myself my own habit of dropping the g's on the end of my sentences and saying ain't instead of aren't. If he ever noticed my efforts to improve myself, he never said anything about it, but I felt that my association with him was broadening me out. He never offered to take me any place but he always seemed glad to see me. I sometimes used to wonder if I wasn't mistaken about the attraction being a purely mental one, but he always managed to steer our talks into impersonal channels.

I was starting to wonder about a number of things. Was I wrong in sacrificing everything just to get ahead? How much was I missing in life by not being like other girls? They fell in love and got married. They had children and seemed happy. Was there something wrong with me? I concluded that there wasn't, but that I just hadn't happened to meet the right man. When I did I was sure that I could bring more into his life than if I were inclined to be fickle and transfer my affections from one to the other as the inclination seized me.

One day there was a lot of excitement at the office. Helen Ryder tried to commit suicide. I found her in the wash room with a half empty bottle of poison lying beside her on the floor. I called some of the other girls and they telephoned for an ambulance. They were all white and nervous after she had been taken away. They started to whisper that Mr. Cunningham had thrown her over. I hoped she wouldn't die, and then I started to wonder if she did, who would get her job? I considered asking Mr. Cunningham for it in case she wouldn't get better. I felt ashamed of myself afterwards for thinking of myself, when the only girl I really liked or had any affection for had had such an unfortunate experience. I made up my mind to go and see her just as soon as I could.

A few weeks later Mr. Cunningham sent for me to come into his office. My heart pounded a little as I rapped on his door and he asked me to come in. He was sitting behind his desk and he told me to come over and sit down. I liked his voice, but I couldn't help letting myself think about Helen Ryder. I tried not to show too much surprise when he came right out and asked me if I'd like to be his private secretary. He said he'd gotten some good reports about me and if I could fill the job my salary would be fifty dollars a week. I felt like a traitor to Helen Ryder when I told him I'd like very much to try it. I wanted to ask him how Helen was getting along but I knew he wouldn't like it, so I thanked him and started out of his office. He called after me that I could start the following morning, and suggested that I take the rest of the day off to celebrate my promotion. I thanked him again, and told myself that I was really getting ahead and that I was going to like working for Mr. Cunningham. Then I decided that I would use the rest of the day to go and see Helen. I had heard she was out of the hospital and I asked the telephone operator what her address was.

A nurse let me in when I rang her doorbell. Helen was still in bed, looking kind of pale and washed out. I told her I was glad she was getting along, but she only managed to smile at me a little and say that it didn't matter much whether she got along or not. I lied when I said:

"All the girls at the office miss you, Helen."

"That's very nice of you to say that, Rose," she answered, "but I know better. I suppose it's perfectly natural that they should have been a little jealous of me. They probably thought I was stepping out of my class when it became known that Mr. Cunningham and I were going together. Well maybe I was. But I've learned my lesson."

"Whatever happened, Helen?" I pretended I didn't know anything about it.

"The usual thing I suppose, Rose. He just got tired of me. He's going to marry some society woman in a few days."

"Gee, I didn't know that!" I was honestly surprised.

"No. It came as rather a shock to me, too. Mr. Cunningham is very capable at concealing his real feelings."

"He didn't impress me that way at all." I was sorry I had spoken, and Helen looked at me.

"Oh you've met him, have you?"

"I met him today. Gee, I hate to tell you this, Helen, but he's offered me your job."

"And you're going to take it, I suppose."

I felt like a traitor again. "What else can I do?"

"Nothing, Rose," Helen assured me. "That's the only thing to do. I'm very glad you got it."

"But what will you do, Helen?" I asked her.

"Oh I'll get along. Mr. Cunningham was very generous with me. He's paid my hospital bill, and I'm told I shall continue to get my salary. Mr. Cunningham is apparently under the impression that money can take care of everything—even a broken heart."

I felt awfully sorry for her, lying there, and knowing that the man she was in love with was going to marry some other woman. I came to the conclusion that love wasn't all it was cracked up to be, and that I'd be pretty careful before I'd get mixed up in anything like that. She seemed to read my mind because she said:

"I like you, Rose; you're a nice ambitious girl. Don't make the mistake I did. Don't ever let your feelings get the better of your good sense."

I told her that I wasn't likely to do anything like that, and then the nurse came in and I said I'd better go. She asked me to come and see her again and I promised her I would.

I went up to Ellis Smith's room that night and told him what had taken place. He seemed to think that Charles Cunningham had played a dirty trick on Helen. I didn't say anything but I wondered how much of it was Helen's own fault. She must have given him some encouragement. Besides, I was going to work for him. I mustn't allow myself to dislike the man whose private secretary I was going to be. I said goodnight to Ellis and went to our apartment.

Pa was still working, but Ma and Jacob had gone to bed. I undressed in the dark and the thick stifling smell from the street made me wish I could get a breath of pure air. We had moved to a different apartment but it wasn't much better. The neighborhood was just the same. The same neighbors still stuck their heads out of their doors whenever anyone came upstairs. I felt as though the whole tenement building was closing in on me, trying to crush me. I wanted to get away from it. I wanted to get away by myself some place. I could have a small apartment of my own now that I was earning more money. I could live some place where it wouldn't take me so long to get to the office. I could be independent, come and go as I pleased. I hated to think of what Pa would say when I mentioned the idea. I hated to think how Ma would feel about it. But nevertheless that was what I was going to do. I'd tell them about it tomorrow.

In spite of what was said at home, three weeks later I was in my new apartment. Pa told me if I moved away I needn't ever come back again. Ma cried and tried to make him understand that I was entitled to have nicer things now that I had a better job. I talked to Dr. Ruthledge about it and he said he would try to convince my father that I wasn't doing anything wrong. But Pa stuck to his guns and said that he wouldn't have anything to do with me anymore. I felt pretty bad about the way things worked out. I couldn't understand Pa's attitude, and it always made me go weak inside when Ma felt bad, but I had made up my mind to get away from Five Points and everything it represented.

My new apartment wasn't very big, but it was mine. I was alone to do what I wanted. If I felt like reading I didn't feel that Jacob was going to come stamping in to interrupt me. My bedroom window looked down on a grassy courtyard and the air was fresh and clean. I sometimes looked at myself in the mirror and told myself, "Rose, you've come a long way, but you're going farther." I used to think of the little girl who made up stories about the grandfather's clock in Pa's secondhand store, and wondered if the man I had seen in my imagination would ever come into my life. Sometimes I felt restless with vague desires.

I was getting along fine as Mr. Cunningham's private secretary. He was always courteous and considerate, and I could see why Helen Ryder might have imagined he was attracted to her when he was only being a gentleman. I blamed her more and more for the whole affair, and I thought Mr. Cunningham had been very generous with her, paying her hospital bills and allowing his firm to continue her salary even after she had made such a fool of herself. He was married now. I used to see his wife's picture in the society column every now and then. I thought she looked a little older than he did but it might have been that the pictures weren't very clear. I used to wonder about their home life and how wonderful it must be to be married to anyone with so much charm and distinction. I watched my grammar even more carefully. I didn't want Mr. Cunningham to think that I was badly educated. I thanked my stars that I had been observing enough to see the difference in the way Ellis Smith talked and the way I used to talk. I didn't see much of Ellis any more. I wondered if he had ever finished that painting of Fredrika Lang that he had started on. I had my doubts; Ellis very seldom finished anything he started. When he was half through with anything he seemed to lose interest and would start on something else. I wondered what there was about him that made him do that. I concluded that he just didn't care enough about anything to make him want to see it through. I remembered what I had said a long time ago. If I wanted anything, I would want it harder than anyone else and I could have it. I didn't intend to forget that.

One day when I was in Mr. Cunningham's office, the telephone rang. I answered it for him and a woman's voice said she wanted to talk to Charles. I don't know what the conversation was about, but he seemed annoyed when he hung up the receiver. He turned to me and said:

"Do you like the theater, Miss Kransky?"

I was surprised because he had never asked me a personal question like that before, but I managed to say, "Yes, I do."

"I had planned on taking my wife this evening," he said, "but I've just found out that she's unable to go. There's not much sense in letting the tickets go to waste, so if you can spare the evening——"

I hardly waited for him to finish speaking, "I'd like very much to go," I answered.

He seemed to take for granted that I'd say "yes," for he continued, "if you'll give me your address, I'll have my car pick you up at about seven-thirty, and I'll meet you at the theater a little later."

While I was dressing that evening, I couldn't seem to satisfy myself. Everything that I put on looked wrong. I wished I had an evening gown of some kind, but I had never had any occasion to buy one. All of a sudden my clothes looked cheap and out of place. I finally decided on a plain blue suit that I had only worn at the office a few times. Maybe he wouldn't notice it under my coat. I hoped he wouldn't.

On the way to the theater I wondered if I shouldn't have been more hesitant about going out with a married man. But somehow it seemed perfectly all right. After all he had intended to take his wife, and as he told me, it seemed a shame to see the tickets go to waste.

He met me in the lobby. I was glad to see that he hadn't worn a dinner jacket. "He has probably worn his business suit on purpose," I thought, "because he wasn't sure that I owned an evening gown and he didn't want to embarrass me." I suddenly felt quite warm and friendly where Mr. Cunningham was concerned. I wondered how any woman, even his wife, could refuse an invitation to go to the theater with him. Between acts he discussed the play with me in his pleasant, well modulated voice, and I was proud to be seen with him.

He accompanied me home in his car, and when I said goodnight and thanked him for such a pleasant evening, he smiled and said that he had enjoyed it too, and maybe we could go again sometime.

I lay awake for a long time thinking about him. I could see how easy it would be for a girl to fall in love with him. I was almost glad that I had had Helen Ryder's experience to warn me against taking things for granted. I wasn't going to misunderstand his kindness and imagine that he meant something else by it. I would be very careful to see that this evening didn't make any difference in our relations at the office. I wondered again about his wife. Was she in love with him? Was he in love with her? I tossed rather fitfully in my sleep.

The succeeding days passed very pleasantly. Mr. Cunningham seemed to take a new interest in me after our evening together at the theater. He used to ask me questions about myself, and gradually I told him about my background—about my mother and father and what a struggle it was to get away from Five Points. He told me certain things about his life, how he always envied people who had the satisfaction of knowing that they had overcome certain obstacles. Things were always too easy for him, he said. He had inherited the business, and all he had to do when he got out of college was to step in and run it. I told him he was too modest—that it took brains to run a business like the publishing business, and he sort of smiled in a tired kind of way, and said that he was glad that somebody appreciated his efforts. Then he changed the subject, but I think he wanted me to know that he certainly wasn't appreciated by his wife. I felt sorry for him and after I went back to my office, I sat and thought about what he had said for a long time.

One evening he asked me if I'd mind staying down after hours and getting out some rather important letters. We worked until almost nine o'clock. It seemed very different to be sitting with him in the office with the lights all on and darkness outside. It seemed to give me a funny feeling of intimacy to be alone with him, knowing that all the other girls had gone home. Once when I was handing him a paper I was almost sure that he purposely touched my hand longer than was necessary, but he seemed to be unaware of it, and I guessed I was mistaken.

When we had finished our work he suggested going out some place for a bite to eat. I was hungry, as I hadn't eaten since lunch time, and he drove me in his car to a little restaurant where we sat together in a booth. He said I looked tired and that he would drive me home. I answered that he ought to be tired too after such a long day. He replied that he was, but that he would enjoy the ride. He said he wasn't too anxious to get home, as things were very unpleasant for him there. I didn't ask him any questions but I knew again that he was trying to tell me that he and his wife didn't get along together any too well. A few days later he told me that I had proved to be such an efficient secretary that he was going to raise my pay to sixty-five dollars a week. I went over to see Ma the next evening and told her I was getting along wonderfully, and that in the future I could give her some extra money every week. Jacob was almost ready to graduate and I said that he ought to have some new clothes and maybe go to a boy's camp for the summer. Ma didn't ask me why I didn't come to see her any oftener. She knew that I was sick and tired of fighting with Pa every time he came home and found me there. He could never forgive me for leaving home and taking an apartment of my own. I stopped in to see Ellis Smith on my way downstairs. He said he had seen me with Mr. Cunningham in the restaurant the other evening, and he warned me to watch my step. I got mad and told him to mind his own business. Ellis always did think he knew more than anybody else.

We started to get busy at the office and Mr. Cunningham found it necessary to keep me after hours three or four nights a week. He always drove me home afterward and once in a while we'd go for a long ride in the country. He said I needed it after being cooped up in the office all day. He talked to me quite a bit about his wife now. He said she had only married him because she knew he had money, but that she was cold and indifferent. His remark gave me a queer feeling of satisfaction. I was glad it was dark so that he couldn't see my reaction to what he said.

One evening after we had been for a long ride, he stopped the car on a lonely road. I felt a funny tightening around my heart as though something was pressing against it. It was hard for me to breathe although the air was fresh and clear. He leaned over toward me and said:

"Rose—you don't mind if I call you Rose, do you?"

"Of course not," I told him. I often wondered why he hadn't called me that before.

"Rose, have you ever been in love?"

I knew what was coming and I was ready for it. Day by day I could feel that we were being drawn closer and closer together. At first I had had an instinctive desire to fight off the emotions which he was able to arouse by just being near me, and then I found it pleasant to let myself go. I knew that the time would come when he would want to put his arms around me and kiss me. I knew that he was hungry for affection—the affection that his wife was too selfish to give him. I knew that it wasn't in my nature to lead him on as I had heard of other girls doing. I knew that when he asked me for my love that I would be honest and straightforward, and not do any pretending.

"I have never been in love before," I told him.

"Nor have I, Rose," I felt a little shiver run through me as he put his arms around me. "I have never been in love before in my life. But I am in love now—with you."

The closeness of his voice made me feel a little dizzy with excitement, but I was able to get hold of myself, and ask him:

"What about your wife?"

"My wife doesn't matter," he told me. "I told you once before, Rose, that she was a wife in name only. There is no sense in our pretending to make a go of it any longer. We are going to get a divorce."

I knew that I was hoping he'd say that. I didn't want to be just another woman in his life. My feeling for him was too strong. I had waited too long. I didn't want an affair. I wanted some reassurance that I meant more to him than just a temporary outlet for his emotions. I asked him, "And after you're divorced?"

"After we're divorced, Rose—well, we'll talk about that later."

He didn't need any answer after that. We kissed each other. I had never kissed a man before and when he released me I felt as though I was in another world. We drove slowly back to my apartment. I was kind of quiet. When I thought of how much I loved him I got as close to him as I could. We turned into my street before I knew it. We stopped in front of my apartment.

I never realized before how incomplete my life had been. Now the days and nights were more wonderful than

I ever dreamed they could be. I used to think I was hard and calculating as far as getting what I wanted was concerned, but Charles changed my opinion of myself. I used to wonder if the soft yielding person I was getting to be was the same Rose Kransky who had made up her mind to get out of Five Points. I concluded that I was the same person but that now I had found what I had always wanted.

Charles was what I had known he would be. Very kind and very considerate. If once in a while I had a doubt or two about where it was going to end, I put them out of my mind as quickly as I could. I knew everything was going to turn out all right. I loved him and I was sure I was loved in return. He didn't say very much about his wife any more, and I decided that it was because he was so glad to be with me that he didn't want to talk about her. I had made him promise that he would keep on calling me Miss Kransky when we were at the office, and I called him Mr. Cunningham. We laughed about it when we were alone at my apartment together. I was very happy.

As weeks went by I began to wonder why he never said anything about the divorce he was going to get. I made up my mind that I was going to ask him about it the first chance I got. He acted a little surprised when I put the question to him one night, and I hoped I hadn't hurt his feelings my making him think that I didn't trust him, but after hesitating a minute, he said:

"I've been meaning to talk to Celeste about it. But somehow the chance hasn't presented itself. But I will, Rose, I'll talk to her about it tonight."

A number of days passed and I noticed a little change in Charles' attitude towards me. It wasn't anything that I could put my finger on, but at times he seemed a trifle cold. "Maybe I was wrong in asking him about the divorce," I wondered. And then I told myself that I had a right to know what he intended to do. Maybe I just imagined that he was different. Maybe he was upset because he was having a hard time at home and he didn't want to bother me with his troubles. I would ask him again about his wife. He might confide in me a little more and I would be able to cheer him up. If love and affection could do it, I felt sure I would be able to.

He acted a little annoyed when I brought the subject up again.

"Don't you trust me, Rose?" he asked me.

I was hurt by his tone of voice.

"Of course, I do, Charles." I put my arms around him and kissed him that he should have such a thought.

"Perhaps I shouldn't have said that," he admitted. "Yes, I have talked with Celeste. I talked with her the other night as I said I would. She's promised to think it over and let me know in a day or so."

Charles spoke of it of his own accord when we were alone together a little while later. He said that his wife had promised him that she would give him a divorce, and insofar as she had no real grounds which would be admitted as evidence, it would all be arranged very quietly. The news made me very happy. I was sure that now Charles would really belong to me. I guess I was a little hasty in saying:

"And after the divorce, Charles, we'll——"

He said, "After the divorce, Rose——well, we'll talk about that later."

I knew I'd have to tell Ma that I was in love, but I put it off as long as I could. I realized it would be a shock to her to know that I intended to marry a divorced man, but

I came to the conclusion that I couldn't keep it a secret any longer. I led up to what I had to say in a roundabout way. I tried to make out as though I was talking about some other girl who was in love with a married man, but I couldn't fool Ma. She guessed that I was talking about myself. She started to cry and I felt all weak and shaky inside, like I always did. She tried to tell me that he couldn't be any good and that made me mad. I told Ma that it was too late to do anything about it now—that I was in love with him. She didn't seem to understand what I was talking about when I told her it was too late. She kept asking me over and over again to give him up. I went back to my apartment convinced that parents had no right to meddle in the affairs of their children.

Dr. Ruthledge came to see me. I knew that Ma had asked him to talk to me and I resented it. I told him that I had a right to live my own life as I saw fit as long as it didn't hurt anybody else. He said that anything anybody did had an effect on somebody else. I argued with him and he brought up the fact that he had helped me and felt responsible for my actions. I felt kind of sorry for him as he stood there talking to me. He looked kind of old and I knew he liked me. But why should he feel that he was responsible for what I did now? I was over twenty-one. I had a mind of my own. I told him that, but he begged me to give up my job and come back to Five Points. My answer was very positive. "After I have worked and slaved to get out of Five Points? Well hardly!" He realized after awhile that there wasn't anything else he could say to me that would make me change my mind, so he left. After all, what could Dr. Ruthledge know about how a young girl feels when she's in love. Of course he had a daughter of his own, but that was different. I wondered how Mary was? I hadn't seen her in a long time. I remembered that she and Ned had broken up. I felt sorry for any girl who couldn't have the man that she was in love with. I made up my mind to see Mary the first chance I got.

I guess about this time some of the girls in the office found out that Mr. Cunningham and I were seeing a lot of each other, and one of them must have gone to Helen Ryder and told her about it because she came to call on me. I could understand how she felt to have some one else going to marry the man she used to be in love with —or maybe she still was in love with him—I didn't know. Anyway, she didn't seem to want to believe me when I told her that Charles was going to marry me. She kept saying over and over again that he'd soon lose interest in me and then where would I be? Finally I lost my temper and told her I didn't need any advice from her. I lay awake for a long time after I had gone to bed. Somehow I couldn't seem to get her words out of my head.

"Rose, the day that you discover that Charles Cunningham no longer cares for you will be the unhappiest day of your life."

Charles had to go out of town shortly after that and I was pretty lonely without him. I realized for the first time how much I'd really come to depend on him. How much it meant for me to be with him. It occurred to me that I had given everything else up. Nothing else mattered to me any more. I knew I couldn't go home. Ma had probably told Pa about me by this time and I could imagine how he felt about it. I hadn't seen Ellis Smith since I had told him to mind his own business when he tried to tell me not to take Charles too seriously. I didn't want to see Dr. Ruthledge after the way I had spoken to him the last time he had come to see me. No, I decided, everything

"Torchy"

The Reverend Thomas Bannion

and everybody else was a part of the past. Charles was all that mattered to me. As long as I could have him I would be perfectly happy to give up everything else. I thought about Ellis for a while and wondered when he was going to fall in love and get married. I remembered how I used to wonder when I was seeing quite a lot of him, whether we had any attraction for each other. I put that thought out of my mind. I knew now that it was just kind of a speculation on a girl's part. I knew that no one ever had or ever would appeal to me but Charles.

When Charles got back from his trip he called me up. It was pretty late, about midnight, and said, that he wanted to see me right away. He came over in a little while and told me that he had rented a cottage for me at Redwood Lake and that he wanted me to spend my vacation there. I wasn't anxious to leave the city, but finally I agreed to do as he suggested. Just as he was leaving we heard a noise outside the door, but when Charles looked outside there was no one there, although I could have sworn there was somebody running down the hall.

Charles seemed very troubled and upset the next time I saw him. I asked him if anything was the matter and he said:

"Rose, do you remember I told you that Celeste had promised to give me a divorce without any fuss or trouble?"

I told him, "Yes, I did."

"Well, apparently she's changed her mind. She's decided to name a corespondent in the suit. I don't know yet what she's got in mind, but if she's planning on bringing this divorce to the attention of the public, I'm going to make her sorry she started anything."

He didn't seem to want to say much after that, and I could see he was moody and depressed, so I didn't ask anything further. I thought that when the time came that I should know more about it that he would tell me. I tried my best to take his mind off of his troubles, but nothing that I did or said seemed to make much of an impression, I felt very sorry for him but for once I was kind of glad when he left. I decided that his wife was a very disagreeable person, but when he and I were married, he wouldn't have anything ever again to worry or upset him. When I fell asleep I dreamed of him. I dreamed that he was in trouble and needed me, and when I awoke I lay for a long time thinking about how much I loved him.

I didn't want to go away without saying good-bye to Ma, and although I dreaded what Pa might have to say to me, I went over to see them. Pa was home and when I told them that I was planning on taking a vacation for a few weeks, Pa wanted to know why I couldn't take Ma along. Gee, I just stood there feeling sorrier and sorrier for Ma. I knew she'd love to come along, but I just couldn't take a chance when I remembered that Charles had promised to come up to the cottage. Pa may be from the old country, but he's no fool. He seemed to guess what was going through my mind while I was standing there. He started to say things about Charles and how I was no good to be running around with him. I tried to hold my temper but finally I couldn't stand any more and I sassed him back. Then Ma started to cry, and I felt weak and funny inside and I started to cry too, and when Pa kept on yelling at me, I told him that I was through, that I was never coming home again, and then I slammed the door and went back to my apartment.

The next day I didn't go to the office. I finished packing the things I wanted to take up to the lake with me, but all the time I was thinking of Charles and hoping he would call me up—when the telephone rang. It was Charles all right but what he told me was pretty upsetting. He said that his wife had finally filed suit for a divorce, but contrary to the promise she had made him, she had actually named a Miss X as corespondent. He told me I had better put off taking my vacation for the time being, because if his wife was actually contemplating naming me as corespondent, it would look suspicious if I went away just then. I told him I would come to work as usual the next morning and he said he would have to be careful about seeing me for a few days until he could learn more about his wife's plans. That night the papers carried headlines about the divorce scandal and hinted that the mysterious corespondent was a girl employed in the office of the Cunningham Publishing Company. My heart sank when I read it. There was no mistaking what it meant. Somehow it made the love which Charles and I had for each other look like a cheap romance, and I felt the way I did the night Dave Herman had taken me to the Green Dragon Dance Hall. I suddenly hated life all over again. It translated beauty into terms that were vulgar and tawdry, but I consoled myself with the thought that Charles loved me and that nothing else made any difference. I was surprised when I went to the door that evening to find Ellis Smith standing there. I invited him in, naturally. I was really glad to see him again; but not for long. He started out by telling me what a fool I was making of myself—that if Charles contested his wife's divorce, the papers weren't going to be satisfied with hinting who the corespondent was—but that my name would be plastered in headlines. I told him he didn't know what he was talking about—that I loved Charles and trusted him, and that he loved me and would look after me. I had a sort of strange feeling when I said that, and remembered that it was Rose Kransky who was talking, Rose Kransky of Five Points, who was always going to look out for herself; but I didn't let on to Ellis that I had any misgivings, and he continued to warn me as to where I was going to end up until I almost had to be rude to him. Then he went away.

Ellis wasn't too far wrong about Charles contesting the divorce suit. Charles asked me a few days later if I'd be willing to take the stand and testify in court that there had never been anything between us. I could hardly believe that I had heard right for a minute, and I said to him:

"But, Charles, you mean that I should swear in court that we have never meant anything to each other?"

"That's the idea, Rose," he told me. "Celeste has made up her mind that she's going to give me some unfavorable publicity in the divorce proceedings, and I'm going to try to prove that any charges she may make are false.

When I hesitated for a minute he continued to stress his point by saying:

"After all, Rose, we don't have to let the whole world know about us. If you love me, as you say you do, I'm sure you'll be willing to do that much for me."

"I do love you, Charles," I told him. "You know I'd do anything that you asked me to, only tell me that it's all right—that everything is going to be all right."

Charles was able to reassure me. He must have seen the look of panic in my eyes—for he said:

"Of course everything's going to be all right, Rose. I'll get the divorce and then——"

I tried to prompt him to go on, "And then Charles——"

He put me off again by saying, "And then—well we can talk about that later."

I don't know how I managed to live through the next few weeks. I was restless and worried. I was home alone every evening because Charles thought it was best for him not to be seen coming to the apartment. I was kind of breathless and frightened with anticipation like I was the night when Charles first kissed me—only this time it wasn't a pleasant feeling. Pa added to my worries by coming to the office and insisting that he be allowed to talk to Charles. I wasn't going to let him in, but Charles heard us arguing outside in my office and came out to see what it was all about. I told Charles it was my father, and they went in to his office together. I don't know what was said, but Pa looked mad when he came out. He didn't even glance at me. I felt sorry for him and yet I blamed him for mixing into my life. I had a right to do as I pleased. The fact that I was in love was nobody's business but my own. Later, Charles called me into his office and although he didn't say much, I could tell that he was annoyed.

Just as Ellis had predicted, the newspapers got hold of my name and there were headlines about me being named as corespondent. I didn't care so much about myself. I had made up my mind by then that no matter what happened, I was going to prove to Charles that I really loved him, by facing the whole thing. Even though it was hard to think about it, I was sure that when the time came I would be able to steel myself to get on the stand and lie about my love for him. What hurt me more than anything though was the fact that the papers weren't satisfied to use my name. They sent reporters down to Five Points and they took pictures of Pa and Jacob. I don't know how they happened to miss Ma, but I had that at least to be thankful for. Ellis came over to see me again when my picture came out in the paper and tried to persuade me to go away without testifying. I told him that I had given Charles my word, and that I wouldn't go back on it. He made me mad like he always did whenever he tried to tell me what to do. He always had such a superior cynical attitude about everything. Ellis always could get under my skin even when I was friendly toward him and used to stop at his room in the tenement building to see his drawings. Before he left he told me again that Charles would never marry me. He said that whether I took the stand or not, if Charles lost the divorce suit, he would blame me for it. Then he said something about the socially minded Mr. Cunningham, and how he would never have anything to do with a girl whose name had been smeared over the front pages of a newspaper. After he left I started to cry. I could see why he spoke as he did, but it didn't shake my faith in Charles. Nothing could do that.

I never saw Charles away from the office any more. The only time he came to see me at the apartment was one night just before the trial when he brought his attorney, Mr. Rigby, with him. Mr. Rigby was very nice and told me they were depending on my testimony to help refute Mrs. Cunningham's charges. I told him I would do my best, and Charles sort of put his arm around me in a half-hearted way. I knew he meant to do it as a sign that he was grateful to me, but I wished he hadn't touched me at all, unless he was willing to go all the way, and hold me tightly and kiss me. I wanted to ask him what was the matter. Why he was acting so cold toward me, but I was embarrassed in front of Mr. Rigby.

Ellis Smith made one more attempt to get me to go away before the trial started, but while he was standing there arguing with me, the door bell rang, and some man asked for me. Then the man handed me a subpoena ordering me to be available as a witness in the trial. Ellis kind of shrugged his shoulders when he found out what it was, and said goodnight and went home. Gee! I was sorry for him in a way too. He meant well towards me. I knew that, but why couldn't he learn not to meddle in my business. I knew what I was doing. If I wanted to stand by Charles it was my own affair. I was a little hurt about the subpoena, but Charles explained to me over the phone that it was nothing for me to worry about.

The day the trial started I had arranged to meet Charles and Mr. Rigby at the court house. I wasn't prepared for all the people who had gathered around to watch what was going on. As I went down the hallway everybody stared at me, and some of them recognized me from my pictures in the papers, and started making remarks about me. I was all shaky and scared by the time I got through the mob, but Charles and Mr. Rigby tried to cheer me up, and told me not to pay any attention to what anybody said. On the way in to Judge Weber's court room, I met Ma and Dr. Ruthledge. Ma cried when she saw me and when I asked her what she was doing there, she nearly broke my heart by saying that no matter what anybody else said she was my Mama, and would stand by me. Ellis Smith came up while we were talking and something snapped inside of me, and I asked him if he'd come there to say, "I told you so." I must say he kept his temper pretty well and when he told me that he was my friend, and wanted me to know it, I could have bitten my tongue off for snapping at him the way I did. Mr. Rigby called me before I could say I was sorry, and I went into the court room.

The next few weeks were like some awful nightmare to me. Mrs. Cunningham had put detectives on the case long before Charles knew she was even going to name me as corespondent. The noise that had alarmed us the night that Charles got back from his trip and came to my apartment proved to be a photographer who had tried to find us in a compromising position. I felt as though everything that was fine and decent in me was being stripped away and made to look dirty and evil.

As the trial progressed I felt myself getting weaker and weaker. At night I'd lie awake and everything that had been said in court would go through my mind over and over again. The hours seemed like years, and always in front of me was the thought that the time would come when I would have to take the stand and deny that I loved Charles. It seemed so long since I had talked to him and felt his arms around me. As I sat listening to the testimony day after day, sometimes I'd try to catch his eye, but he never seemed to want to look at me, and when once in a while he would glance my way, he treated me as though I was a stranger. I knew he had to act that way but it made me feel as though I had been deserted.

Finally they called my name, and I braced myself and tried to look very deliberate and composed as I walked up to the stand. I could feel everybody's eyes on me, and I could hear a whisper start around the room as though I was the one they had been waiting to hear. I felt naked and ashamed, but I tried to tell myself that I was Rose Kransky, whose life was her own business, and that what I was doing I was doing for the man I loved, and that nobody else in the world mattered only him. While I was telling myself that I was Rose Kransky, I thought of Ma and Pa, and I remembered that today was our New Year's. Suddenly I thought of myself as a little girl and going to the synagogue with Ma and Pa and the tears started to come to my eyes. I could hardly hear the clerk as he made me promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but I managed to choke back a sob as I said "I do."

When Mr. Rigby started to question me, I felt safe and sure of myself because we had already rehearsed what I should say, but when Mrs. Cunningham's lawyer, Mr. Taylor started in on me I got all nervous and confused. I could see Charles looking at me and I could feel that he was trying to give me courage, but it took every bit of strength I had not to break down and confess everything. When Mr. Taylor questioned me about Redwood Lake and the cottage that Charles had rented for me, I wondered how they had found it out, but I said, "No, it wasn't so."

Then Mr. Taylor brought a phonograph record into court. One of Mrs. Cunningham's detectives had put a dictaphone machine in my apartment and the whole conversation that Charles and I had had was admitted into evidence. The judge told me I was guilty of contempt of court and fined me five hundred dollars which Charles paid right away, but I knew then that I had failed as a witness and that Mrs. Cunningham would probably win the divorce. Charles looked at me in a way that made it seem as though it was all my fault, and when court was adjourned and I went back to my apartment, I felt as though the whole world was beginning to close in around me.

The next day I sat in the court room feeling very dejected, but glad in a way that it was nearly over, because then Charles and I could be together again. I was half dreaming about how happy we would be when I heard Ellis Smith's name called. I could hardly believe my ears at his testimony. He said that he was engaged to marry me. I looked at Charles to try to find out what it was all about but he half signaled me to sit quietly. I was furious at Ellis, and terribly puzzled why Charles had let him testify as he did. I called Charles on his private phone that night, but I couldn't get any satisfaction from him. Then it dawned on me. Charles was using everybody and everything to win the case. What happened to me or to my reputation meant absolutely nothing to him. I had been blind. Blind! I was so in love with him that I was unaware of his real motives. I nearly went crazy with fear and humiliation. Had he been lying to me all this time? Did he already have me classified with Helen Ryder, who had tried to commit suicide when she found out he was through with her? I prayed to God that night—the first time I had prayed since I went away from Five Points. All night I walked from one room to another. My whole body ached. The top of my head felt like it was on fire. I had a cold panicky feeling in the pit of my stomach.——

The sun had been streaming through the window of my apartment for quite awhile before I realized that it was another day, and somehow I managed to change my dress and make my way to the courtroom.

Almost in a daze I found the chair I had sat in for so many weeks. Charles was called as a witness. I heard his voice. He tried not to look at me. I tried to hate him, but I couldn't do it. No matter what he had done I still loved him. I wanted to go up to him in front of everybody and throw my arms around him. Then I became conscious of what the lawyer was saying to him. My head was reeling with all kinds of crazy mixed up thoughts, but somehow the testimony was beginning to penetrate through my numbed mind. The lawyer was saying:

"Mr. Cunningham, do you see Miss Kransky sitting here at this table?"

Charles answered, "Yes, I do."

"Do you notice anything peculiar about Miss Kransky's present conduct, while listening to the questions put to you by counsel?"

I wasn't conscious of attracting attention but I was glad when Mr. Rigby said:

"Your Honor, I object to the unnecessary questioning by counsel as far as Miss Kransky is concerned."

The judge sustained the objection and Mr. Taylor went on:

"Mr. Cunningham do you mean to tell this court and jury that you had no affection for this girl?"

Charles' answer burned into my brain like dry ice.

"None whatsoever. I have never had any affection for this girl."

Everything went black in front of me. Charles had said that—Charles, the man I loved—Charles who had sworn he was in love with me. I jumped to my feet. I hardly knew what I was saying. My voice sounded strange in my own ears.

"How can you say that? Lies—that's all you've been telling—lies. I can't stand it any longer—I won't! I was never engaged to Ellis Smith—I'm not engaged to him. Why don't you tell the truth?—why don't you tell them that you love me?—why don't you tell them what I've meant to you—what you've meant to me? If you're ashamed of it, I'm not. I can't go on with this farce any longer. You've got to tell them the truth, Charles. I can't stand it—I never was engaged to Ellis Smith. I never loved any one but you."

I was led out of the courtroom sobbing hysterically.

The next day I was able to think a little more clearly and I realized what I had done. I went out for a newspaper and read the account of what had taken place, and the decision of the jury. Mrs. Cunningham had won her divorce. I called Charles, but he told me he was through with me and hung up the receiver. Ellis came over and stood listening quietly while I blamed him for what had happened. When I had finished he told me that he was willing to make up for any harm he had done. He offered me his name, Mrs. Ellis Smith. I went away with him to a little house he had rented. I suppose I should be grateful to him, and I try to be, but I don't seem to have any feeling left. I just feel numb.

When Pa took sick and died I went over and stayed with Ma for a few days. I can't even write about the all gone feeling I had inside of me. Pa said that he forgave me, and I know that him saying that helped Ma and me both to take his death a little easier. Poor Ma! I'd do anything to make her feel better but there isn't very much that I can do. Ellis spends most of his time at his old room at the tenement building. I can't blame him. I suppose he's working at his painting again but I never ask him any questions. I don't know how long I can continue to live here in this house.

My story is finished. I, who was Rose Kransky, found it convenient to take the name Mrs. Ellis Smith. I, who wanted to live my own life now find I have little life to live. What the future holds for me, I don't know. Right now I don't particularly care.

CHAPTER

VI

ELLIS SMITH

THE introduction to the chapter which I have invited Ellis Smith to write will be brief. I am frank to confess that I know very little about him. His entrance into the Community of Five Points has been veiled in mystery. We have not inquired, nor has he seen fit to tell us anything about his background. Whether he will reveal further information about himself in the following pages, I cannot say. That is up to him.

I am Ellis Smith. Although I prefer the name of Mr. Nobody from Nowhere, I found it rather awkward, so to those who know me, or think they know me, I am Ellis Smith. That is not my real name, but my real name doesn't matter.

Why I came to Five Points is as much a mystery to myself as it must be to others. However, I have no intention of leaving. Life here fascinates me. The people are real, or at least as real as people can be under the circumstances.

I had heard of the Good Samaritan long before I unwittingly wandered into his community. Although Rose Kransky and others have called me a cynic and a scoffer, I maintain that they have a false impression of me. However, I will say this. I have never been in sympathy with what Dr. Ruthledge purports to stand for. The brotherhood of man is an overworked phrase. There is no true brotherhood of man. I have found that we are selfish by nature, and it is only because we are too cowardly to face that fact, that we attempt to cloak it over with a lot of stupid, hypocritical philosophy.

I had the misfortune of being born into a family which had always possessed a great deal of wealth. That may seem like a peculiar statement to make, but it is a true one nevertheless. It is only the rare individual who can overcome the handicap of having been born with the things that most men struggle a lifetime to acquire. Not that worldly possessions are important in themselves, but the things which are accomplished, while arriving at a state of security give a zest and a meaning to this thing we call living.

Although secretly rebelling against my mode of existence, I somehow managed to keep my discontent pretty well to myself until I had finished college. My mother had definite ideas as to my future. I was to take my place in society (what society? I used to question bitterly)—I was to marry a girl of my own social standing, and I was in due time to turn another litter of parasites into a world already cluttered up with offspring who had no real reason for being. In a weak moment I proposed marriage to a very sophisticated young lady who took great pleasure in having me escort her home from tea and bridge parties while she chattered inanely about the world in general. "I wonder what she'd do," I said to myself one time, "if this silly little bubble of hers were suddenly to explode, and she had to get out and earn her own living?" Even while the thought was going through my mind the smoothly running limousine in which we were riding seemed to change suddenly into a jolting street car. Instead of the immaculately groomed young woman sitting beside me with her bored eyes staring vacantly into space, I saw an animated girl not too tired from a day of work to converse intelligently with me. Her face began to take on character—the look of one who is alive and vital. Her expensive mink coat dropped from her shoulders, and was replaced with a much more becoming shabby tweed, which had seen better days. Somehow I felt that I could be in love with this self created companion and I reached out and touched her hand. The vision vanished as quickly as it had appeared. Cynthia turned a rather languid look in my direction and drawled:

"I never knew that a sunset could make you so sentimental that you would want to hold my hand."

"Listen, Cynthia," I told her, "I'm awfully tired of this existence. Let's get out of it while we're still young. Let's try to find out more about ourselves. We're not living, not really, we're just existing in a world which we had nothing to do with creating. I'm sure there must be something better—something which isn't quite so futile as this—this stupid environment in which we find ourselves. Let's chuck it all and start out fresh, just you and I."

She had a trace of mocking amusement in her voice as she answered: "I'm quite satisfied with this world that we live in, my dear. I may not have had anything to do with creating it, but that doesn't lessen my enjoyment of it a bit."

"Well, I'm getting out of it," I told her. "I've had enough of it. If you don't care to come along—well then, I'm sorry, but I shall have to leave you behind."

"Am I to consider our engagement broken?" she asked.

"Yes, Cynthia," I said, "I'm clearing out tomorrow."

I had a little money of my own which I was determined not to use unless it was absolutely necessary. I knew also that there was a considerably larger sum at my disposal in a trust account, but I persuaded myself that I was to try out my search for reality completely on my own and managed to secure a job on a cattle boat which was sailing for Europe.

On the voyage over I felt for the first time that I was really face to face with life. Even the lowly cattle which I fed and watered seemed to have a definite place in the scheme of things. I had formulated a plan. I would remain in Europe indefinitely. I would go to France and study painting. I had always possessed a certain facility for drawing and perhaps I should be fortunate enough to find an answer to my vague desires in a career of that nature.

The next period of my life was spent in learning fundamentals. I learned what made a fine painting, what colors to use and how to mix them; but when I tried to apply what I had learned I found myself completely dissatisfied with the results. I painted a sunset, but it was only a sunset. Nature seen through the eyes of the artist, Ellis Smith, seemed a very poor substitute for the real thing. I tried painting people, but they were only people. I couldn't catch the elusive quality which makes one individual stand out from the other. In desperation I told myself that my background was to blame; that insofar as I had never lived, how could I hope to transport living things to canvas? I became moody and disconsolate. I remember walking one night along the banks of the Seine and contemplating the futility of all existence. The dark swirling water seemed an inviting place of refuge from the feverish torment which possessed me. For one dark, half premeditated moment, I tottered dangerously on the brink of self destruction, but reason put a restraining hand on my shoulder and drew me back. Like a flash I saw what I must do. I must forget my painting for a time and try to learn what life could teach me about itself. The next morning I packed my few possessions and returned to America.

In a small mining town in Pennsylvania, I managed to find employment. I sweated with the other miners hacking at the bowels of the earth for the release of the black stuff called coal. Although I tried to know my fellow workers, they shied stiffly away from me, and after a rather bitter period, I concluded that there was something about me which made them unwilling to accept me. After a while I contracted a bad cough and I was advised to look for work some place else.

For a while I wandered here and there, working in construction camps, laying ties for railroads, working in the wheat fields; but always learning—learning the things I should have known years before—that self preservation is the first law of nature—that man is not a social animal but has been driven to it by that law. I had not touched a penny I hadn't earned and I was too busy providing myself with three meals a day to think much about my painting, although I knew that some day all that I was experiencing would give me eyes which really saw, instead of hands which aimlessly spattered meaningless daubs on canvas. I wanted truth. I had found it. This wasn't a pleasant world. Let the fools who wanted to dress it up in coats of many colors continue to delude themselves. I wanted to see it as it really was. Hard, cold, suspicious, hostile. That was the world that I agreed with. I'd take it that way without any sham or pretense. I read from time to time with a growing feeling of resentment of the work of Dr. Ruthledge in Five Points. The Good Samaritan he was called. Some day, I decided, I was going to meet that man. Some day I was going to knock his pretty theories of self delusion into a cocked hat.

I met him quite by accident. I had been ill for a week or so and had gotten out of bed too soon. Rather giddy from fever and lack of food, I wandered one day down a shabby street in an unfamiliar section of a city. I was attracted by organ music which came from a small white building which looked as though it might have been a church. It was the Abend Lied, and the musician was doing full justice to the melody. I decided to enter and when the last notes had filtered through the unpretentious edifice, I complimented the organist on her playing. A rather startled girl asked me how I had gotten in. I explained that the door was open and was tempted to add that I thought churches were meant to be entered. In response to my questions she informed me that her father was the minister, and that his name was Dr. Ruthledge. The humor of the situation suddenly dawned on me. Here I was in the Church of the Good Samaritan talking to his daughter. I started to laugh. A great wave of angry merriment swept over me. Then I was conscious of a cold perspiration. I strained my eyes to see better in a world that was suddenly black. I knew I was about to do the most ridiculous thing a man can do—I was about to faint. I made a frantic effort to reach the door but my knees buckled under me. When I awakened I was in bed in the Good Samaritan's home.

It was necessary for me to remain there for several days. A recurrence of the fever left me weak and helpless. Mary

Ruthledge proved to be an attentive and capable nurse, but I railed at the chain of circumstances which made it necessary for me to meet the man whose teachings I had come cordially to despise under such conditions. He was what I had expected him to be, soft spoken, and considerate, but filled with the smug complacency of a man who has deluded himself with the idea that he was performing a service to mankind. However, I couldn't find it in me to challenge his beliefs while I was still indebted to him for his hospitality. Later I thought I shall give him my version of the brotherhood of man.

When I had recovered my strength sufficiently to leave, I came to a decision. Sooner or later I must get back to my painting. My aimless wanderings, while instructive, were not actually productive. What better place to start my life's work afresh than here in Five Points? Here was life in the raw. Here men struggled and worked for their daily bread. Here women lived and loved and had children—children who started out with a challenge ringing in their ears—here was the survival of the fittest. The weak and undersized were pushed to one side to make way for the strong and the able. This was not a community of parasites—here life was molded into the pattern of one's own design. I rented a room in a nearby tenement building and took up my abode in Five Points.

Gradually I came to know my neighbors. I liked them. I studied their faces and tried to recreate in my mind what they would look like on canvas. But still I couldn't bring myself to do the thing I wanted most. The idea of painting attracted and repelled me almost at the same time. Was it fear? Was I afraid of failure? Did I instinctively feel that should my efforts prove untalented I was doomed to a lifetime of disappointment? I wasn't sure.

I touched my pencils and crayons with nervous uncertain fingers and then pushed them to one side. There was a more immediate problem to be settled. I was without money and I needed a job. I found one in the paint factory at Five Points and my days were soon occupied in manual labor.

Before long I made the acquaintance of an Italian workman named Luigi Pasquali. One day I asked him to pose for me. I had difficulty making him understand just what I meant as he was not too familiar with the English language, but when he finally grasped what it was I wanted him for, he very kindly consented.

I decided to start out with charcoal. The oil painting could come later. Although I tried to remain outwardly calm, I was conscious of a tightening at my throat, and a feverish anxiety as I placed a clean drawing paper on my board. The furrowed serenity of the old Italian's face, the peaceful yet slightly questioning look in his faded blue eyes filled me with a desire to capture the soul of the man, and bring it to my drawing. Night after night he sat stiffly in my room, moving this way and that, as I requested. Slowly yet surely to my delighted eyes he began to take shape. With a grateful heart I congratulated myself that I had not lost the fundamentals of my art. If only—if only my experiences had added the vision that was needed. The head was completed—now for the elusive expression I wanted so badly. Over and over again I tried. It might as well have been a photograph. I had missed entirely the thing I wanted most. I savagely threw my pencil to the floor and was about to turn on the patient Luigi, when I suddenly remembered that it was I who had failed, not he. I told him I would give him the drawing later. I knew that I never would.

Luigi never saw his portrait. He died a short time later. Mrs. Pasquali came to see me and asked if she might have it. I tried to remember how those faded blue eyes would look into eternity, and with a few strokes of my pencil I was able to create an expression which gave some semblance of the thing I had been striving for. She accepted it with a humility that was touching, and I cursed myself for my stupidity in being unable to give her something worthy of the brave uncomplaining man who had been her husband.

Several times while I had been working on the drawing, I had been visited by Rose Kransky, who lived with her parents just above me. I was immediately fascinated by her bold attitude towards life—her unashamed demands that it give her the things which she, as an individual insisted on having. We had many discussions about existence in general. She seemed to find my observations interesting, and I was amazed and delighted to find some one who would so quickly strip life of its meaningless veneer, and emerge with a fundamental truth. She had an unappeasable desire for knowledge which she immediately absorbed, and I found myself envying the man with whom she would some day fall in love. I hoped it would be the right man for her, and that he would bring to her the completeness which her searching nature required. At times I was annoyed at her ruthless attitude, but the charm of her frankness dissolved any feelings of resentment I might otherwise have felt. I knew she would not be content to remain in Five Points forever, and I was not greatly surprised when she told me she had secured a good position and was moving away to take an apartment of her own. We promised we would see each other often, and although I heard from her from time to time, for several months, she disappeared almost completely from my life.

I saw Dr. Ruthledge occasionally. He made frequent visits to the tenement building and generally managed to call on me. I tried not to be openly hostile towards a man who had once taken me into his home, but I could't help but develop a positive antagonism towards him. The cool calm conviction which he had in his beliefs infuriated me beyond all reason. His seeming detachment from life and its stark reality made me believe he was suffering from a form of dangerous self hypnosis, dangerous because there was no way of inoculating against it, those with whom he came in contact. That he, himself, was convinced that he was rendering a service to the community was bad enough, but that the community should accept the same belief without questioning, struck me at once as being both stupid and contrary to reason. I accused him of encouraging the name of the Good Samaritan by which he was known in order to give a false impression of charity, and kindness. Gradually however, almost against my will I became somewhat reconciled to the fact that he was sincere in his desire to help. His motives at least were beyond reproach, and although I still disagreed violently with his beliefs, I couldn't help but have a certain amount of grudging admiration for him as an individual.

My next attempt at painting was inspired by Fredrika Lang. She came into the community of Five Points much as I had done. Apparently friendless, she had taken a room across from mine in the tenement building. Life had etched an unforgettable pattern of tragic resignation on a face that must once have been beautiful. We seemed drawn together almost from our first meeting. She consented to pose for me and again I went through the agony of trying to transpose on canvas, the things which were suggested in her face. Time after time I furiously destroyed what I had done the night before, and started anew. I beat my head against the flinty unrelenting wall of inspiration in a vain attempt to capture the enigmatic smile, the unknown mystery of this strange woman with her unrevealed past. This time I mustn't fail, I warned myself. A failure now will mean the end of everything for you,—despair—and the oblivion of anything you may have thought you've had within you to create.

Patiently Fredrika sat for me every night, but before I had even met with half way success, there came the tragedy of which she has no doubt told you. I drew enough money from the bank to defray the expenses of the trial, and arranged for her to return to her room after she had been pardoned by the Governor for the murder of her husband. But after the harrowing ordeal through which she had just passed, I felt it inhuman to ask her to allow me to go on with her portrait and so for the time being at least, my painting remains at a standstill.

During the trial I clashed several times with Dr. Ruthledge, when he refused to divulge the fact that Fredrika was Ned Holden's mother. I failed to see why the boy should be spared the knowledge at his mother's expense, and although I was forced again to admire the minister's courage in taking the witness stand in defiance of the sentiment of the community, I began to understand more clearly that we could never see eye to eye on anything.

Rose Kransky came to see me a short time later. I was genuinely pleased by the change in her appearance. Almost before she spoke I said to myself, "Rose has fallen in love." Her blue eyes held an expression of content.

Her cheeks seemed to reflect an inner glow of satisfaction. I was suddenly proud of her—the daughter of Abe and Mrs. Kransky had taken life in her stride and was savoring the sweetness of an existence denied to the weak and timid. But my apprehensions began to be aroused when she spoke several times of her employer, Charles Cunningham. Could this be the man? Charles Cunningham, a married man who had always been promiscuous in his relationships with women? She admitted that it was. He had promised to divorce his wife and marry her. I called her a fool, and because in her heart she must have known that she was, she became angry and left.

I felt let down. Almost as though a painting I had put great faith in had turned out to be a cheap imitation. Straight thinking, logical Rose—the girl who could strip life of its veneer and arrive at fundamentals—her ruthlessness had led her into the oldest trap in the world, a love affair which could bring only disappointment. I hated Charles Cunningham—I despised him for what he had done, and although I tried to dismiss the whole thing from my mind, Rose had too powerful a hold on my imagination to do so. I had always prided myself on being able to mind my own business. What others did was no concern of mine as long as they left me alone, but in this case, I determined to do something. What it might be, I hadn't as yet decided.

The developments which followed Rose's love for Charles Cunningham were no great surprise to me. His wife sued him for divorce and named Rose as corespondent. Cunningham did nothing to try to protect Rose's name, but instead insisted that she testify that there had never been anything between them. Rose promised to go through with it. I again called her a fool, but I knew that

I admired her for her courage and although I wasn't in love with her, I was stupidly jealous of the man who could inspire such genuine devotion as she had for Charles Cunningham.

I tried to make Dr. Ruthledge see that he could salvage a little of Rose's reputation by testifying in court as to her good character, but he refused to do so. Instead he came forward with an argument as to the sanctity of the home. Sanctity of the home be hanged! Rose's good name meant more to me at the moment than all the marriage vows that were ever made. I went to Cunningham's attorney and told him that if it would help win his case I would be glad to take the stand and tell the jury that I was engaged to marry Rose.

Rose watched me with questioning eyes as I gave my testimony. When I asserted that she was my fiancée I could see her struggling to maintain her composure. I could tell that the jury had been impressed, and although I knew Rose resented what I had done, I couldn't repress a smile of satisfaction as I left the stand.

The next day, however, Rose broke completely and openly admitted her love for Cunningham. There was only one verdict for the jury to bring in, and being the type of person that he was, there was only one thing for Cunningham to do. He told Rose that he was through with her. There seemed to be no alternative for me. I had declared publicly that I was in love with Rose. I went to her now and offered her my name.

We took a small house a short distance from Five Points, although I kept my room in the tenement building. Rose was bitter over the outcome of her affair. I tried at first to reason with her. I tried to make her see that she still had her life before her, but I was unable to reach the Rose I used to know. The eager young girl who had so often visited me in my rooms was now a hard vindictive woman.

Mr. Kransky died rather suddenly not long after Rose had agreed to take my name. While she was staying with her mother, I decided to return to my quarters in the tenement building. I visit Rose only frequently enough to forestall any gossip which might otherwise be started.

At any rate, for the most part I am back in my room in Five Points. The events which affected my life have made no impression on the community. Men still trudge daily to their tasks in the paint factory. Women still cook and love and have children—children which emerge from their shabby cradles with a challenge ringing in their ears. The same challenge which Rose heard. I wonder if the challenge isn't a futile one?

CHAPTER

VII

SERMONS

WHEN it became known that this book was about to be written—that the stories of those whom I have met in Five Points would be told—a great many letters were received, asking if I would deem it advisable to devote at least one chapter to the talks which I have given at various times in my little church. I have naturally been greatly pleased that they were remembered and asked for. Of course it would be impossible to include all of my addresses, but I have tried to remember those which were asked for the most frequently and they will be contained in this chapter. It would make me happy to feel that as you read them you would remember that it is I, Dr. Ruthledge, speaking to you personally.

THERE IS NO DEATH

October 15th, 1937.

Over a year ago, the startling news was brought to me that my old Italian friend, Luigi Pasquali, had passed away. When I went to call on his widow, Katherina, I was confronted with the same question that is asked at one time or another when a loved one is taken from us—*Why?*

"Dr. John, so many years—so many years—my Luigi he here with me and now—now, he gone. Nobody I have, Dr. John. Why this happen—why?" she asked.

"Mrs. Pasquali, each one of us asks that same question at one time or another—why?" I answered.

"My Luigi, he good man. He no so old. He not sick so long. Dr. John, I not know how I go on all alone."

"You must go on for Luigi's sake, Mrs. Pasquali," I replied.

"I go on by myself for my Luigi? He gone—My Luigi he gone, Dr. John."

"No, Mrs. Pasquali, he isn't really gone." I tried to reassure her.

"Not even death can take our loved ones away from us. You remember last April, when Luigi gave me a lamp that he had made—the lamp that I have in my study—the lamp of Friendship as I've called it? Every time I see that lamp, it'll mean that Luigi is still with me—that Luigi, the first friend I came to know in Five Points, over sixteen years ago—is still here."

"He gone," she persisted.

"No, Mrs. Pasquali—nothing can take away the memories that you and I and his friends have of him—not even death can take those precious memories away from us—thousands of little things that we need never forget. Mrs. Pasquali, I try to think of—I like to think of death as a journey. Do you know what I mean?" I asked.

"Like going away," she questioned.

"Yes—like going away on a trip—a journey into a far off land. Death is only a journey into a far off land. Although the dead are absent—away from us in body—only in body, Mrs. Pasquali—their memories are always in our minds and in our hearts—they live in our thoughts constantly.

My wife has been gone for many years, and yet, her spirit is with me always. I remember the little things that she did—the things that she loved. I feel her love and her understanding around me always—nothing will ever change that. She isn't gone, really. Luigi is not gone. Do you understand?

She replied, "My Luigi, he like to sit in that chair—that big one. It is like I see him now, laughing a little bit. He say to me, 'Katherina, it get late—it time for the sleep.' Every night, Dr. John, he say that to me, from the big chair. Then I know it is time I make the coffee and we sit in here and we drink the coffee before we go to bed."

"You can never forget that—you'll never forget those precious moments. And as the days go on, you'll remember the little things that Luigi used to do—the flame of remembrance never dies. There is no real death. Our loved ones never really leave us. A thousand sweet memories are holding them fast to the places they blessed with their presence and their love. We remember the work that they left—we remember the books that they read—the words that they said—the songs that they sang. All these become a part of our thoughts and our daily lives. And you know, and I know, that no thought can be lost and no memory can be blotted out. The spirits of our loved ones stay with us—there is no death."

"The grief that we feel over the death of a loved one is deeper than most of the sorrows that come to us, and it is difficult to try to reconcile ourselves to the loss that has left such an empty place in our lives. To all those who today are mourning the loss of a loved one, may these words enter into their hearts and bring them peace, in the thought that there is no death—only the body dies—the spirit remains with us always."

ARMISTICE DAY

November 11, 1937.

"Friends and neighbors gathered here this evening are peoples of every nationality and creed, many of whom remember back nineteen years, when the Armistice was signed—the Armistice which brought to an end the Great World War. Many of you look back with heartache and with tears on what the World War did to your families—to your boys. It seems only yesterday that we stood on the streets and heard the chimes of the churches, the whistles of the factories, the cheering of the crowds; the long awaited words, The Armistice is signed—the war is over.

"And then several months passed and the first transport bringing American soldiers landed in New York. And up and down Broadway we heard the marching of feet. And again we heard the bugle, not of war, but of peace. The cheers of the American public echoed and re-echoed 'our boys are coming back home.' What a gala holiday was celebrated. Emotions ran high—the strain was over—the war was over—the first American soldiers were again on their own soil.

"For the time being, the American public did not remember that in many homes in the city and in the country, shone brightly the gold stars—stars that told us of the men—the boys—who would not—who could not come back—men and boys, who had died on foreign soil. Each year on November eleventh at eleven o'clock in the morning, we are asked to turn to the East and remember the men who did not come back.

"Friends, there seems to be a word that has found its way into the consciousness of countries all over the world—a word which we know, just nineteen years ago, brought horror, destruction, agony to mankind—WAR. Hardly has the destruction of the last war been remedied before we have the foreboding—the indication—that there is likely to be another war before very long. Do we want another war? Can we afford another war? As I have read the newspapers—as I have seen the newsreels showing the devastation in China—Japan—I have been hoping that the men who control the destiny of this great country of ours will have the courage to say to Europe—to Asia—if you insist on making war on each other, do not expect an ounce of American grain—a dollar of American money—nor a man wearing an American army or navy uniform to set foot on foreign soil. Do the men—will the men—who carry the destiny of your mothers and your fathers—of your homes and your families, in their hands—will they dare to set up America as an example of what a real armistice can and should mean? You young mothers, who are rocking your babies, singing them lullabys—do you know what is being planned while you dream of your son growing into manhood? There are those, who are planning to make bigger and better airplanes—a flight of an airplane—a flight of death, not life. You mothers and fathers who send your young boys to school each morning—who are making plans for their futures—do you realize that this Armistice Day—there are those who are making uniforms and boots for soldiers to wear? Do you mothers and fathers realize as you hear the prayers of your boys—of your babies—that there are those who are testing chemicals to make deadly gas—to destroy that which you have brought into the world? Do you mothers and fathers realize that while you are trying to build sturdy, young bodies, that somewhere there are those who are waiting to again blow the bugle notes that call only those who are fit to be killed? You, who would build splendid men, strong, erect—do you know that there are those who are trying to produce more powerful guns—guns that may some day leave a golden star in your windows and bitter hatred in your souls?

"Are we going to continue to observe the Armistice that was signed on November 11th, 1918—or are we going to be caught in the whirlpool of war madness? My friends, it's for you to answer that question."

GOOD FRIDAY

April 15, 1938.

"Friends and Neighbors—Today is Good Friday. Over nineteen hundred years ago, a Man was put to death because he dared to tell the truth. Because He dared to expose the lies and hypocrisy of the world—The world turned against him and thought to silence Him forever by sentencing Him to die on the Cross. But the truths which He revealed did not perish on the Cross, but have lived. Down through the centuries they have come to us. The tender, comforting words of the Man of Sorrows. Tonight, let us look back to the three long hours of agony He endured on the Cross. Let us review the last Seven Words which came from His lips. The executioners lead Jesus to the spot where the Cross is lying on the ground. They violently stretch His hands and feet to the places marked for them, and fasten them with nails to the wood. Mary hears the strokes of the hammer and every blow wounds her heart. Mary Magdalene's grief is intensified by her incapability of helping the tortured Jesus, who is heard to speak: it is His first word on Calvary—'Father forgive them for they know not what they do.'

"It is the sixth hour, or as we call it, midday. The sun withdraws his light, and darkness covers the face of the earth. The stars appear in the heavens, all is silent as death. The thief whose cross is at the right of Jesus feels himself touched with repentance and hope. Turning to his companion, he upbraids him for having blasphemed Jesus, and then turning his head toward the Cross, he said to Him—'Remember me when thou shalt come into thy Kingdom,' and Jesus said in his second word on the Cross—'Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.'

"Mary draws near to the Cross whereon hangs her Son. The thick darkness has dispersed the crowd. Jesus looks with tenderest affection upon Mary, his mother. The sight of her sorrow is a new grief to His Heart. He is dying, and his mother cannot console Him. Mary Magdalene is there, distracted with grief, and John, who is overwhelmed with sorrow. The silence is again broken. Jesus speaks to the mother, and to the beloved disciple. It is His third word. 'Woman behold thy son.' After that He said to his disciple, 'Behold thy Mother.'

"It is close upon the ninth hour, the third hour after midday. The agony of the Man of Sorrows has become so great, and it forces from His lips the plaintive sigh; it is His fourth word, 'My God, My God! Why hast Thou forsaken me?'

"There was but one detail of prophecy which was as yet unfulfilled; years before the royal psalmist had said: And they gave me gall for my food; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. Well he knew that in answer to his words one of the soldiers would present to his parched and dying lips, a sponge full of vinegar. He came to fulfill all and do a perfect work, and he breaks that awful silence by that word so expressive of suffering. It is his fifth word: 'I thirst.'

"And now His eyes begin to close and His lips become cold and livid. At the moment when men lose their speech, He, Jesus, lifts up His head, opens His eyes and fixing them on Heaven, speaks thus—it is His sixth word—'It is consummated.'

"This Man, worn out by suffering, exhausted by His three hour agony, whose few words were scarcely audible to them that stood round His Cross—now utters a loud cry. It is His seventh and last word—'Father into thy hands I commend my spirit.'

"And so, on this day of days, we—you and I—have only to remember the Crucifixion to know that in spite of greed and hate, of strife and struggle, of hatred and injustice, the sufferings of life—the faith of one Man still is the hope of mankind. The truths that He gave to the world—the truths and the principles which were uttered by His lips centuries ago, can be a Guiding Light to all peoples at all times."

MEMORIAL DAY

May, 1938.

"No doubt, many of you who have come to our church today are recalling from the past and remembering the present, the tragedy of War touched your lives in one way or another. I rather imagine that there are Gold Star Mothers in the audience today—women who have given their sons as cannon fodder to the God of War. Women who this minute must be thinking: 'He's talking about me. I gave my son as cannon fodder to the God of War—so long ago and yet—yet it seems like it was only yesterday morning. Dad—Dad was waiting outside and Jack—he was just a baby—when he had to go. That morning—I'll never forget that morning when my son said: "Mom—Mom—it's time I was getting started." "Yes,—yes, I know, dear." I tried to keep back the tears—"Have you—have you everything packed that you'll need? We didn't forget anything, did we?" "No, Mom, I don't think so," he answered. "There's very little needed, you know." "You'll take care of yourself? Be careful about catching colds. You know how a cold hangs on, especially this time of the year. And when you get over there—well, they say it's awfully cold and damp in France. I don't want anything to happen to you. You know, you're just about all I've got in the world besides Dad, and if I lost you—."

" ' "You know that old saying about a bad penny. I'm coming back, Mom—I'm coming back." But he didn't come back. He didn't come back. And they gave me a gold star—and called me a Gold Star Mother.' These are the thoughts many mothers are thinking today. And, friends, seldom do we remember those who have come back from the wars—the veterans in and out of hospitals. So many of us wait for Memorial Day to remember that there are men living who served in the Civil War and in the Great World War. They, too, know the meaning of War—the tragedy, the horror, the destruction, that it brought into their lives. The veterans of the late World War will long remember the horrors of Chateau Thierry, of the Argonne, and Verdun. The veteran who has every reason to say, 'Would to heaven I could forget—the Argonne. Mud and slime—torn bodies—blood--blood. Would to heaven I could forget! Would to heaven I could forget—The Argonne—mud and slime, torn bodies —blood and blood.'

"No, friends, these men will not forget. They can't. War has left its indelible mark on their souls. We of today, who have lived through a period of War and know what it means—we, who have children—growing boys—we, who hear from day to day, the threat of War—are we going to be willing to forget that the waving of flags, martial music—the cheering of crowds can mean Peace rather than War—that there can be parades of Peace? What are we parents going to do about it? What are you mothers going to say when the little boy that you tucked into bed each night, grows to manhood only to be used as cannon fodder?

"Friends, there can be Peace! There must be Peace! And you, who are rearing to manhood the men of tomorrow, should instill into the plastic minds of your babies, the real meaning of War. Take away the toys that represent war—the toy soldiers and the sailors, the guns and cannons, the miniature battle fields. Teach your children the message of Peace. Today, as at no other time, we have gathered not only to honor those dead and living who have fought for their country, but today, too, I believe we have gathered here to see the Guiding Light of Peace.

"O God, in Thy infallible wisdom, imbue our minds and hearts with a peaceful strain. Teach us and help us to walk by the Ancient Golden Rule. Raise Thy hand against those who would ruthlessly lead the world into ravages of war. In Thy compassion wilt Thou spread Thy protecting wing o'er the humble sons of men, giving to them security of life, and to their loved ones, an everlasting solace. For life and for peace, we humbly plead, O God, in the name of Him who died that we might live. Amen."

UNREST OF THE WORLD

September 29, 1938.

"Friends and Neighbors—Tonight I'm going to talk to you about conditions that affect you, and me, and in fact, either directly or indirectly, every person in the world. The thing that is foremost and affects more people today than ever before, is Unrest—Unrest. What is the world coming to? At the present rate it is not headed for a peaceful end. There are disagreements in families, children and parents quarrel, neighbor challenges neighbor, the environments become unbearable. Homes are divided, and communities raise a wall of distrust and envy. Each person looks on the other with a spirit of defiance as if he expected to be shorn of his birthright.

"The people have a seemingly unconquerable desire to do something differently. They wish to come and go at will. Girls and boys leave their homes because of family restraint or possibilities of greater earnings. Husbands and wives come to the parting of way through inattention, incompatibility, and other home wrecking causes. A young woman will occupy a corner of the intriguing triangle; a home is broken up and the girl loses her reputation.

"Friends, such feelings of disquietude are anything but a healthy condition. It is the very antithesis of the great moral greeting, 'Peace on Earth, good will toward men.' What a wonderful thought that is. What a far reaching effect on the turbulent world, if everyone would take that theme as his personal precept. What a blessing and salvation of mankind, if every one would emblazon his shield of duty with that maxim of unselfishness. But, today, it would seem that our shields have been shaken free of any thought for others, by the trembling, morbid world—and by world, I mean the world of people.

"Yesterday, a young man came to me; I have known this lad for years—he had grown up in our community. His lips were trembling, his cheeks were flushed. I asked him why he was troubled. He said, 'I'm going to leave home—get away from here—I'm sick of it all.' I had him sit down, and after a moment inquired why he was leaving. 'Well, you see,' he said, 'my folks still think I'm a youngster. I'm over twenty-one, and have a right to do as I please. They want me to work at certain things I don't like, and never will. I'm leaving, that's all.'

"Well, if a person's mind is made up to do a certain thing, it is often hard to change it. I said to the young man, 'Johnny, I don't know what your parents have in mind, but I do know that they have always been fair and square as far as I've heard or known. You're twenty-one; they're over twice as old. Their experiences have been far greater than yours. You say you have a right to do as you please. Of course, every one has—so long as it does not interfere with the rights of others.'

"There you have the cause of much of the restlessness of today. The right to do as one pleases. You can delve into the cause of every disagreement from the back-yard disputes to the international discords, and in the majority of cases you will find some one has trampled on the rights of others. Naturally, those are fighting reasons for red-blooded people. And, those reasons were probably engendered by the theories of 'Survival of the fittest' and 'Every man's house is his castle.'

"Then, literally, we have the rabid unrest. Then we ask ourselves, What to do, and when; where to go, and how; whom to trust, and why—all these thoughts racing through the minds of men. Analyze this to your satisfaction; your thoughts, your observations and your reactions, and see if this is not true. Restlessness—nerve wracking, heart straining, and soul wearying. Is it not so?

"Peace—peace is the salvation for unrest. What is peace? Is it something mythical, forbidden, or never to be found? It would appear from the present status, it is all of that. Ah, my friends, what a comfort if we could sit in our homes without fear or care. If we could meet our fellowmen face to face with a smile and firm grip of hand, we could drive all frowns, and tears, and distrust, into the nether world. Where is this peace? Where has it flown? We preach the gospel of peace; we hope and we pray, yet the dove of peace is not discovered. We weep tears of self-compassion, yet we cannot secure calm and tranquility. We tremble in fear, and rage at our timidity—but we don't practice. There is a destiny that makes us brothers. Until we recognize the rights of others; until we do as we would have others do to us, there will be unrest. May God hasten the day when we can live together in Peace and Understanding."

THANKSGIVING DAY

Nov. 24—1938

Thank God, we can rejoice in human beings. Thank Thee because we may our brothers help—that Thou hast opened our eyes unto their needs,—taught us the melody of being kind. Thank Thee that we can trust, even though a thousand times we have experienced faith betrayed, we still have faith in man. Thank Thee that we can hear underneath the rush and clamour of the crowd, the harmony of the universe. Thank Thee for the sight that we may see the pattern of the perfect plan.

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving Day. How many of us stop to think what the word Thanksgiving really means, and in what way that word Thanksgiving is connected with Thanksgiving Day. We all know what thanks means. We use that particular word innumerable times during the course of a day. We thank one another for this or that, for something we have received. We like to associate the word giving with something someone presents us. So, today, we have the great privilege of giving thanks to God for what He has given us—He who has given so much and we so little.

Many of us, at one time or another, who have to fight our way through life—many of us feel that what we accomplish, we accomplish alone—that it isn't necessary to give thanks to anyone. What a truly false conception that is. We have only to pause, to reflect, to know that this is not a world of individuals. We have only to look about us to realize that each one, in a measure, is dependent on the other. This is not a world of individuals—it is a world of, shall we say, brothers, who work in unison for a common cause. Again if we pause to reflect, we cannot help but recognize the Great Architect of the Universe who has given us our natural resources—He, who provides the sunshine and rain, and lends us the land and the sea and all therein. It is He who conceals the germ of life in the seed and causes the seed to grow and bear fruit. It is we who benefit by his gifts of mercy.

I like to let my thoughts drift back to the time, three hundred seventeen years ago, when our Pilgrim forefathers set aside a day of Thanksgiving, to offer their thanks and gratitude for the mercies of Providence during the closing year. I think of the terrible hardships they endured—the crude living, lack of food and clothing, sickness, and all the other causes of dissatisfaction. Yet, even though many ills beset them, they were duly thankful for blessings received. It is a lesson of perseverance, devotion and graciousness, that the early colonists handed down to us. As we look around us today, we see, on every hand, comforts that have been given us; making for us a more complete life. There is no possible way of comparing our conveniences with those of the Pilgrims—for they had none. Do we ever pause to consider our good fortune and give thanks for it? Are we to be less thankful than the pioneers who suffered every privation that we may, now, enjoy comfort? We can do no less than they—and in the doing—make the thanksgiving—sincere and devout.

Friends, it is tomorrow that we have been asked to make one of thanksgiving. Thankful, that our lives have been spared. Thankful for our homes and our nation. Thankful for the loved ones and our friends. Grateful for the gifts of Providence.

We have considered our personal benefits as a just cause for thanksgiving. But, there are other benefits of a far reaching nature. We have very lately, passed through a period of uncertainty. We could almost hear the rumble of war machines—we could feel the tenseness in our land as the people waited in suspense, fearing that we would become embroiled in another war. At the same time, our sympathy went out to those in immediate danger, yet, our prayers were offered and our hopes kindled that the world would not be engulfed in any grim, devastating calamity. We can be truly thankful that great men humbled their pride, rather than sacrifice the lives of men. We would, surely, be ungrateful if we did not recognize this. We are in one great accord, and thankful, that those across the sea have not had to bargain their lives with the God of War.

For what can we be more thankful, than peace in the hearts of men? Gentleness, sufferance and humility. A thanksgiving of joy that resounds around the world. Peace on earth, good will toward men. May its fruits multiply without end, that it may be a perpetual peace, and every day, a day of thanksgiving.

Each day, as the sun sets in the west, we will have received that for which we should be thankful. Let us be thankful. Let us prove to the world we are a nation of peace—and home loving. In our unity, let us set the example. For what, could we be more thankful—than a world of Peace?

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As I finish the writing of these little talks which it has been my privilege to bring to my friends and neighbors in Five Points, I sincerely hope that some word that I may have spoken—some thoughts that I may have expressed may make it easier for you, my readers, to look upon life in a broader, more understanding way. I hope that it may help you to remember that no matter how difficult your problems may be—no matter how tiresome, the road you are now traveling may be—that others have been faced with the same obstacles, and with faith and determination and courage have managed to overcome them.

CHAPTER

VIII

SUMMARY

THROUGH this book I have been permitted to bring you some of the happenings which have affected the lives of those whom I have come to know and love. But life goes on and what will happen in the future must of necessity remain untold. As you know, Ned Holden has come back to Five Points. I cannot help but feel glad that my recent illness prompted him to return. Aside from my own natural joy at seeing him again, it is far better for my daughter, Mary, to know the truth—that Ned is married. She must make the best of the situation.

Rose Kransky will not have an easy time of it, but I feel sure that out of the bitterness of her heartbreak she will emerge a nobler character. For Ellis Smith I have nothing but the sincerest admiration. Some day I hope he, too, may find the happiness which he deserves. I pray that in the near future Ned Holden will become reconciled to his mother, Fredrika Lang, and that the grief which Mrs. Kransky feels at the loss of her husband will be softened by time.

My new assistant, Tom Bannion, has high hopes for the future of Five Points, but I am inclined to think that underneath the surface life will go on as usual. For as changeless as the evening star which heralds the approach of night is the Community of Five Points. The map of the world may change—kings may topple from their thrones—dictators may swerve the course of nations—but the Melting Pot will remain the same.

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